Populist Citizens' Media Perceptions and Media Use in Western Democracies

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List of Articles

This cumulative dissertation is based on the four publications listed on this page. This accords to §7 in the doctoral guidelines of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences of the University of Zurich, dated July 8th, 2009.

Article I: Schulz, A., Müller, P., Schemer, C., Wirz, D. S., Wettstein, M., & Wirth, W. (2018). Measuring populist attitudes on three dimensions. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research, 30*(2), 316—326. doi:10.1093/ijpor/edw037.

Article II: Schulz, A., Wirth, W. & Müller, P. (2018). We are the people and you are Fake News. A social identity approach to populist citizens' hostile media and false consensus perceptions. *Communication Research,* 1—26. Advance online publication. doi:10.1177/0093650218794854

Article III: Schulz, A. (2019). Where populist citizens get the news: An investigation of news audience polarization along populist attitudes in 11 countries. *Communication Monographs, 86*(1), 88–111. doi:10.1080/03637751.2018.1508876

Article IV: Müller, P. & Schulz A. (under review). Who uses anti-elitist alternative media? Exploring predictors of occasional and frequent exposure. *Information, Communication & Society.*

Synopsis: Schulz, A. (2019). Populist citizens' media perceptions and media use in Western democracies. *Synopsis of a cumulative dissertation*. Zurich: University of Zurich.

The articles are referred to in the text by their Roman numerals.

Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

> "There is great anger in our Country caused in part by inaccurate, and even fraudulent, reporting of the news. The Fake News Media, the true Enemy of the People, must stop the open & obvious hostility & report the news accurately & fairly. That will do much to put out the flame…
>
> …of Anger and Outrage and we will then be able to bring all sides together in Peace and Harmony. Fake News Must End!"
>
> Donald Trump[1]

Introduction

In the past five years, during which this dissertation was composed, populism has provably gained momentum. The results of different national elections, for example, held within those 11 Western Democracies studied in this thesis, illustrate historical victories of populist politicians, parties and movements (cf., Aalberg, Esser, Reinemann, Strömbäck, & de Vreese, 2017; van Kessel, 2015). In 2014, populist parties received strong support in the general elections of Sweden (Sweden Democrats: 12.86%; +7.16%) and Bulgaria (Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria: 32.67%; +2.13%) and in the 2015 general elections, populist parties in Switzerland (Swiss People's Party: 29.4%; +2.8%), Poland (Law and Justice: 37.6%; +7.7%) and the United Kingdom (UK Independence Party: 12.6%; +9.5%) each reached record results. 2016 came with the election of Donald Trump as the president of the United States and the UK Brexit referendum, which was supported by 51.89% of voters. In 2017 populist politicians and their parties received remarkable support in the Netherlands (Party for Freedom: 13.06%; +2.98%), Germany (Alternative for Germany: 12.6%; +7.9%), Austria (Freedom Party of Austria: 25.97%; +5.46%) and France (National Front: 13.2%; -0.40%). And in 2018 the Sweden Democrats increased their vote share by yet another 4.67%, while in Italy the Five Star Movement was elected by 32.68% of voters (+7.12%) and subsequently, reached out to form a government coalition with the right-wing party Northern League.

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[1] Two subsequent tweets from Donald Trump's personal Twitter account (@realDonaldTrump) on October 29th, 2018. All punctuation and capitalization in original.

Wherever it thrives, populism has been identified to challenge constituent elements of liberal democracy – a form of government that has, among scholars, intellectuals, and politicians, longtime been considered the standard of political legitimacy foreseen to prevail for the decades to come. But the rise of populist forces raises deep concerns with regard to the prosperity of consolidated liberal democracies (Foa & Mounk, 2016; Plattner, 2015). The potential for conflict lies in the very nature of populism itself. The phenomenon has been identified as a thin-centered ideology that is comprised of very few but also clear ideas about the gestalt of politics and society (Mudde, 2004). In brief, populism is held to be anti-elitist, people-centrists, and widely anti-pluralist in that it places the will of a homogeneous people above everything else, including minority rights and the rule of law. In this respect, some authors identify populism's worst possible outcome is the tyranny of the masses (Hawkins, 2009). Thus, although populism enters the public debate with the promise to overcome the limitations of liberal democracy (Canovan, 1999), more often than not it subverts central features of liberal democratic systems (Waisbord, 2018).

One of these central features of liberal democracy are the free media that stand in the midst of this crisis. Next to the political elite, populist forces willfully attack established media institutions and blame them to be lying to the people. In countries in which populism is in power, the media are quickly exposed to (subtle to often also blatant) measures of political repression (e.g., Poland; cf., Stanley, 2016) and in countries in which populism is on the rise, the media face repetitive accusations that potentially erode public trust over time (e.g., Germany; cf. Fawzi, Obermaier, & Reinemann, 2017). When taking into account the important role that media play within democracies, these populist attacks against the media appear nothing but disturbing. While the debate about which specific function (or functions) the media should fulfill in democracies is ongoing among philosophers and communication scholars (Nielsen, 2017) it is widely uncontested that robust and largely trusted media institutions form a necessary condition for democracies to persist (Carey, 1999; Strömbäck, 2005). The journalistic dissemination of information about daily political affairs informs public knowledge and public opinion in that it provides common facts based on which debates, opinion formation, and not least, voting are enabled. Put more broadly, media help set the conditions for a shared space or horizon that, in theory, brings about societal integration (Maletzke, 1980; McQuail, 1992). If media are repressed or not trusted by large segments of the population they are eventually prevented from fulfilling this very public service. Subsequently, societies were endangered to polarize and ultimately, democracies could begin to sway. Hence, if the media are at risk, democracy will be, too.

To evaluate in how far the upsurge of populism can be linked to a societal polarization as well as to the erosion of democracies and specifically, to the crisis of confidence in many public institutions such as the news media, is without a doubt one of the most important tasks currently put into the hands of social scientists. This cumulative dissertation provides investigations that aim to contribute to this research.

Specifically, the present project applies an individual level perspective in order to investigate the manifestation of populism within the citizenry. This does not refer so much to an investigation of the extent to which populism might have pervaded civil society but rather, to an investigation of what could be called a *populist belief system*. According to Philip Converse (2006) a belief system is defined as "a configuration of ideas and attitudes in which the elements are bound together by some form of constraint or functional interdependence" (p. 3) and as a "set of systematic differences in attitudes, perceptions, or behavior patterns" (p. 65). The main aim of this dissertation is to seek for evidence of such mating attitudes, reality perceptions and behavior within the mass public that can, via one way or the other, be linked to the populist ideology. Thereby, the individual support for the populist ideology itself is envisioned to represent the populist belief system's core from which other attitudes, perceptions, and behavioral inclinations can emanate.

As belief systems can have quite large scopes and difficult to trace boundaries this dissertation will follow upon only one specific trajectory within the populist belief system to wit, a path particularly interesting in light of the crisis of confidence in the mass media referred to above. Regarding the important role that media play in liberal democracies the thesis sets a particular focus on media related perceptions and behavior, although, of course, many other dimensions could be just as interesting and similarly important. The main research question of this dissertation thus reads:

How are the populist ideology and its specific relationship to the news media reflected on the citizen level?

I am referring to a particular set of individual attitudes, perceptions and behavior. In that order, this dissertation will focus first on the concept of *populist attitudes* that has in prior research been identified as the representation or support of populism on the individual level. In this thesis, populist attitudes will be understood as the populist belief systems' core. Next, moving out of the populist belief systems center I will focus on populism's relationship to the news media. In essence, this encloses an investigation of the relationship between populist attitudes and individuals' *media perceptions*. As according to communication

science theory media perceptions are strongly interlinked with how individuals perceive public opinion, relationships between populist attitudes and *public opinion perceptions* will also be examined. Moreover, this dissertation aims to examine the *news preferences* of citizens with populist attitudes. With this, also a behavioral dimension of the populist belief system is captured. Together, these different relationships will be empirically investigated in multiple countries using large scale survey research.

Ideally, these investigations help to map the populist ideology and its media-related repercussions on the individual level. To this point, the research outlined is mainly one for relationships that persist between different attitudes, perceptions and behavioral inclinations. However, the mechanisms that cause these links are well worth investigating as well. To offer considerations regarding the processes that could explain the assumed relations, this thesis develops a *social identity approach to populist attitudes*. This approach combines two broader theoretical notions. The first path that I will follow in order to explain for the patterns in question is the one of communication effects. The second one will speak to psychological mechanisms as described by the social identity theory. For reasons to be outlined later, these two can jointly help to understand the establishment of the populist belief system within the mass public.

An analysis as such is of utmost importance in order to fathom the phenomenon of populism itself, to assess its actual impact on the welfare of today's democratic societies and not lastly, to inform the search for answers and solutions to prevailing societal problems. If citizens with populist attitudes were shown to no longer trust the news and if this related to how they perceive public opinion and moreover, if populist attitudes were shown to relate to a unique news choice, different indicators indicating societal polarization were identified, which could directly be led back to populism.

Chapter 1 expands further upon the relevance of the present research endeavor. It does so, in introducing the wider research context within which the present study is located and by pointing out research gaps within this context. Furthermore, the chapter introduces in more detail the notion of political belief systems that can serve as a guiding principle through this study. On this foundation three more specific research questions will be developed. The chapter closes with an overview of the different articles that were written in order to address these questions.

Chapter 2 introduces a definition for populism as a thin political ideology. This includes an examination of the key components that constitute the phenomenon. A specific focus will

be set on the understanding of populism as an identity politics to emphasize that populism views politics and society in strictly binary terms. In doing so, this chapter sets the scene for the upcoming three chapters in which I will step from the ideational level to the individual level. These chapters will hence unfold detailed illustrations of the repercussion of populism on the citizen level.

Chapter 3 starts out with an exploration of populism as a political attitude. Based on a critical discussion of prior research the concept of populist attitudes will be defined. Going from there, a survey measurement for populist attitudes will be introduced. This chapter will also be the first to present empirical findings as the proposed measurement will be put to different validity tests using multi-country survey data.

Chapter 4 introduces the social identity approach to populist attitudes. This social identity perspective aims to explain why and how attitudes, perceptions and behavioral inclinations are interlinked within the populist belief system. Once this framework is outlined, the Chapter explores links between populist attitudes and individual media perceptions. Moreover, also public opinion perceptions will be investigated as those have been shown to stand in an important relationship to individuals' media perceptions in previous research. At last, the relationships between populist attitudes, media perceptions, and public opinion perceptions will be empirically studied using survey data in four countries.

Chapter 5 goes beyond an analysis of attitudes and perceptions and links populist attitudes to behavioral inclinations. Assuming that populist attitudes can be linked to specific media perceptions, it could as well be that populist attitudes relate to particular media diets. Assumptions about respective relationships will be informed by the social identity approach to populist attitudes. The Chapter will expand the approach by insights coming out of the selective exposure research. Two survey studies will be introduced that provide first comparative insights into the news use of citizens with populist attitudes in multiple countries.

Chapter 6 draws together the dissertations' main findings and contributions regarding the research on individual level populism and its relations to media perceptions and news preferences. The findings will, each in itself but also all in their mutual interplay, be discussed regarding their potential to cause societal polarization. Based on this summary, demands for future research will be delineated.

Chapter 1 : Research Gaps and Research Questions

Parallel to the growth of populist parties within Western Democracies, the scientific study of the phenomenon intensively progressed within the past decade. Political science, sociology, psychology as well as communication science have contributed to a better understanding of the phenomenon, showing that the study of populism is a genuinely interdisciplinary endeavor. The common goals are to explain the electoral success of populist actors, to assess populism's relationship to democracy, and to investigate its effect on political cultures.

Research Context and Main Objective

Theoretical and normative work has been published throughout (Canovan, 1981, 1999; Dahl, 1956; Laclau, 2005; Mouffe, 2018; Panizza, 2005; Taggart, 2000). This work has informed and advanced the definition of populism and lead to a widely accepted consensus among scholars to understand the phenomenon as a thin centered political ideology (Mudde, 2004). Moreover, in outlining the ideology's worldview beyond its core assumptions, theoretical literatures have offered important insights regarding the potential of conflicts between populism and different democratic elements, such as the mass media (e.g., Krämer, 2014, 2018; Mazzoleni, 2014; Waisbord, 2018).

Largely guided by this theoretical work, empirical studies on populism have evolved as well. This research can be grouped best by the specific perspective that it applies. First, a comparably rich corpus of studies focuses on the supply side of populism what encloses investigations of populism within the political and media spheres. On the level of texts content analytical studies investigate the manifestation of populism within political party manifestoes (e.g., Rooduijn, Lange, & van der Brug, 2014), political party broadcasts (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007), the news media (e.g., Wettstein, Esser, Schulz, Wirz, & Wirth, 2018; Manucci & Weber, 2017), talk shows (Blassnig, Ernst, Büchel, & Engesser, 2018) as well as within social media (e.g., Ernst, Engesser, Büchel, Blassnig, & Esser, 2017). These studies also enclose very few elite surveys tapping for the attitudes of populist politicians (e.g., Stavrakakis, Andreadis, & Katsambekis, 2016).

Second, a comparably smaller, but sturdily growing number of studies focus on the demand side of populism, that is, on investigations of populism within the citizenry. This research can for itself be divided up into two subfields. One line of work focuses on the development of a measurement able to capture populist attitudes within survey research. Over the past years, various populist attitudes scales have been introduced. While most of

them rely on the same or very similar definitions of populism, their specific operationalizations often differ largely and are thus, still up for debate (cf., Castanho Silva, Andreadis et al., 2019; van Hauwaert, Schimpf, & Azevedo, 2019). A second line of research on demand side populism goes beyond finding and validating a measurement to populist attitudes. These studies are, judged by their general aim, closest to the aim of the present research. That is, they seek to understand the general mindset, nature, character, or worldview of those citizens who support the populist ideology and in doing so, offer first ideas about the shape and extent of the populist belief system. This mainly refers to the analysis of links between populist attitudes (or sometimes populist voting) and other socio demographic, dispositional, attitudinal, or behavioral variables such as gender (e.g., Spierings & Zaslove, 2017), personality traits (e.g., Bakker et al., 2016), mental states (e.g., Spruyt, Keppens, & van Droogenbroeck, 2016), conspiratorial beliefs (Castanho Silva, Vegetti, & Littvay, 2017), political attitudes such as political orientation, or specific issue positions (e.g., van Hauwaert & van Kessel, 2018).

Third, only recently, but with all the more vigor, media psychological studies have started to link both sides, supply and demand, by investigating the effects of populist communication on citizens' attitudes. This has been done within experimental research (e.g., Hameleers, Bos, Fawzi et al., 2018; Matthes & Schmuck, 2015; Wirz, 2018a, 2018b) but also by linking content analytical and survey data (P. Müller et al., 2017; Wirz et al., 2018).

These different branches of populism research have strongly contributed to a better understanding of populism among scholars and slowly are scientific insights informing the public debate about this phenomenon's character.[2] But to say the obvious, in each of these fields a plethora of research questions still remain unanswered. This dissertation will contribute theoretical considerations as well as empirical investigations to the second branch of populism research as it appears most insufficiently studied, especially when judged from a communication science perspective. While sociological as well as political psychological research have provided most studies on the psychological nature of populism, empirical studies of demand side populism from an angle particularly interesting to the field of communication are still few and far between.

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[2] For example, see the *The Guardian* series on populism (https://www.theguardian.com/world/series/the-new-populism) or the Swiss TV science magazine *SRF Einstein* on populism (https://www.srf.ch/sendungen/einstein/populismus-verstehen), which both feature many populism scholars from sociology, political science and communication science.

This is surprising given the many hints offered by anecdotal evidence that point to an almost obvious relationship between populism and media related perceptions and behavior. Specifically, numerous news reports have within the past years portrayed a rather dense and problematic relationship between these two entities. These reports reveal verbal fake news accusations against leading news institutions by populist leaders, but also physical attacks by followers of populist movements against journalists that take place in the middle of public demonstrations (e.g., Gujer, 2018; A. Jamieson, 2017; Somaskanda, 2017). This reporting is paralleled by an increasing concern about declining trust in media institutions on the aggregate level (Reinemann & Fawzi, 2016). Yet, it is completely unclear if and in how far the rise of populism actually relates to these observations, that is, if the link between the support of populism and hostile media attitudes within the citizenry is systematic.

To this point, mainly theoretical work has made an effort in outlining and understanding the relationship between populism and the media by confronting and comparing these entities' conceptions of society, democracy, and truth (Krämer, 2018; Waisbord, 2018). To be brief, the conclusions of these considerations are rather dark in that they point to a great damaging potential that populism can have for democracy in that it can severely destabilize the established media system in many ways. However, this thinking has not yet been shifted to the individual level and no respective empirical investigation of the matter has thus far been undertaken. But as long as the anecdotal and theoretical links are not analyzed empirically, they remain at best weak indicators for something of which's actual existence we can, at this moment, not be sure. We do not know yet, in how far the populist ideology as well as its dense relationship to the news media illustrated by anecdotal evidence and delineated by theoretical work shows any sign of systematic manifestation on the individual level. It is the main objective of the present research endeavor to fill this research gap. A series of empirical studies will be undertaken, in order to understand the support for populism and it's relation to media perceptions and news consumption in the mass public.

The Populist Belief System

These relationships will be investigated as elements of a *populist belief system*. Political belief systems generally unfold following a particular structure that I consider to be particularly useful also as a structure for this thesis. In that sense, the notion of belief systems can serve as a guiding principle through this dissertation. Likewise, in referring to a belief system I acknowledge that my research is located within a greater research program that aims to understand the belief system as a whole. As it is therefore relatively important for the re-

search endeavor, I will introduce the general idea behind belief systems in more detail in the following. Afterwards, I will turn to this thesis' specific research questions.

The notion of political belief systems has mainly been put forward by Philipp Converse in his famous article on 'The nature of belief systems in mass publics' (2006). The article, originally published in 1964, has provoked a fiercely held and persisting scholarly debate, what has contributed to it being cited as "celebrated, or notorious but certainly powerful" (Kinder & Kalmoe, 2017, p. 3). The essay is thought of as one of the most influential works in the field of mass political opinions, "cited each year in scores of publications, some agreeing and others disagreeing" (Inglehart, 1990, p. 107). The said debate mainly concerns Converse's findings and the conclusions and implications deduced therefrom, rather than the concept of belief systems in itself. I will briefly touch upon parts of this debate further below. However, it is important for the reader to know that this thesis mainly seeks to profit from the structure that defines belief systems. This structure can be applied to the populist ideology and it can as well serve as a guide through this dissertation.

The basic idea behind the notion of political belief systems is that general ideological orientations can be systematically linked to other attitudes, perceptions and behavioral inclinations, thereby building a "logical whole" (Converse, 2006, p. 8). In Converse's terminology, the different entities that are important to a particular belief system are referred to as *idea-elements*, the relationships between these elements are referred to as *constraints*. The different idea-elements that together constitute a belief system differ with respect to the centrality that they have within the system. Some idea-elements are more central than others and hence, potentially influence less central components. In this respect, Converse speaks about *superordinate* or *crowning postures* "involving premises about the nature of social justice, social change, 'natural law'" (p. 7) that can "serve as a sort of glue to bind together many more specific attitudes and beliefs" (p. 7). Moreover, belief systems differ with respect to the number of elements by which they are set together. Some may involve large numbers; others will be rather narrow in range. Converse himself has focused on the liberal-conservative ideology and with that, according to his own words, he has dealt with "belief systems that have relatively wide ranges" (p. 4).

It was Converse's main objective to trace belief patterns within the general population. With that, his central aim was very close to the one pursued in the present study. One of the most important (and most discussed) findings sparking from his study of belief systems was that the consistency in which the individual level responds to a belief system seems to

increase with increasing formal education. In other words, attitude constraints as they should come about according to some particular ideology only showed consistently among the more politically aware strata of the population but were only very loosely connected or even random among the lower educated segments of the population. Converse argued that the latter might not have the intellectual ability to consistently grasp a particular belief system in all the complexity that it comes with. It was primarily this conclusion that caused great controversy because, according to Inglehart, "it has powerful normative implications, raising the question whether representative democracy is meaningful or even possible, if nonattitudes are widespread as Converse's analysis implies" (1990, p. 107). Robert Lane, for example, hence called for an investigation of individual reasoning processes that could explain for what Converse had identified as inconsistencies in the response patterns of less educated individuals (Lane, 1973).

Although this debate is extensive and sensitive, I dare to add another thought: The cohesion with which belief systems are represented on the individual level, that is, across all segments of the population, could also depend on the specific belief system's range and complexity. More specifically, it would not be unreasonable to assume that belief systems that spark from less complex ideologies should be easier to comprehend across all population strata and subsequently reflect rather consistently across all parts of the mass public. Accordingly, so-called thin-centered ideologies comprised of only few political ideas, such as the populist ideology, could be interesting candidates for a respective investigation.

Converse measures constraints between idea-elements statically by estimating how well different idea-elements can predict one another. A very similar approach will be followed within the present research. With a closer look at the individual level support for populism, the populist belief systems core will be examined first. This will include considerations as to what could build the populist belief system's superordinate posture that is deemed to hold together the greater logical whole as well as a discussion of the core features necessary for populism to be. In this connection, the concept of populist attitudes will be developed. Secondly, moving out of the belief systems center following a trajectory that is of particular interest to communication science, constraints between the support for populism and individual media and public opinion perceptions will be investigated. Last, individual news preferences will be related to populist attitudes to seek for systematic patterns also regarding behavioral inclinations within the populist belief system. Figure 1 visualizes this outline. This dissertation devotes one specific research question to each of the depicted layers,

which will be derived further below in this chapter. Empirical investigations will be undertaken in order to respond to these questions.

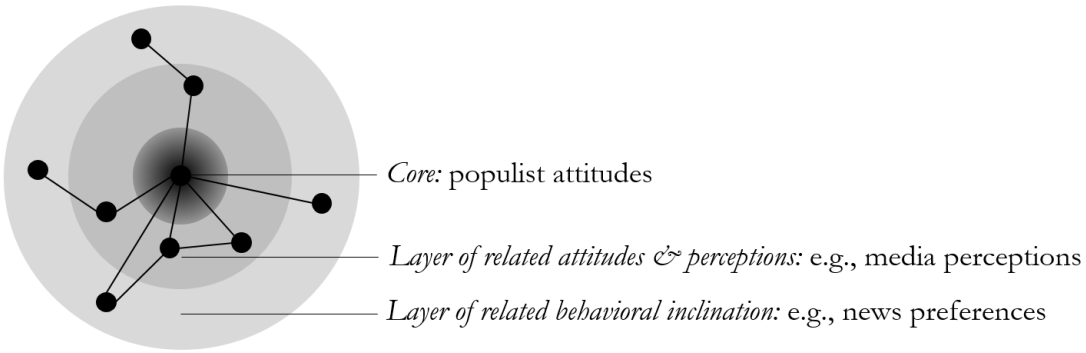

Figure 1. The populist belief system.

But before I can turn to these specific research questions of this dissertation, another aspect warrants attention that refers to the question of "what causes beliefs to cluster in certain ways" (Lane, 1973, p. 83). In other words, this question refers to the mechanisms that can potentially explain which idea-elements within a particular belief system relate to one another and how and why they do so. Many different scientific paradigms promise insight regarding this question. In this thesis, I will limit my own considerations to two perspectives as they seem particularly interesting with regard to communication science as well as with regard to the very nature of the populist ideology. I am speaking of *communication effects* and *social psychological mechanisms* as described, for example, by the social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). As Converse himself has touched upon both of them, the two appear all the more suitable to bolster the theoretical considerations in the present research.

As to the first, belief systems are, according to Converse, created by small creative elites from which they are as well publicly diffused. For example, a few intellectuals or political leaders might construct an ideology and define how this ideology can charge specific issues or entities. Subsequently, these systems are presented to the public as natural wholes in the sense of: "If you believe this, then you will also believe that, for it follows in such-and-such ways" (2006, p. 9). I argue that as far as populism is concerned, the lion's share of distributing the populist ideas is managed by populist leaders. In spreading what has been coined *populist communication*, they are assisted by news and social media in differing ways (e.g., Aalberg et al., 2017; Wirth et al., 2016). Research on populist communication was able to show that the mediated distribution of populist messages and styles influences citizens' emotions

(Wirz, 2018b), attitudes (P. Müller et al., 2017; Wirz, 2018a; Wirz et al., 2018), perceptions (Hameleers, Bos, & de Vreese, 2017a; Hameleers & Schmuck, 2017) and behavioral intentions (Hameleers, Bos, Fawzi et al., 2018). Though these effects are by no means unconditional, populist communication has been identified as a key factor in the establishment of individual level constraints between idea-elements relevant to the populist belief system. Importantly, these studies provide different conceptualizations of populist communication. Key to the present project is the understanding of populist communication as *populist identity framing* (cf., Hameleers, Bos, Fawzi et al., 2018). According to this notion, populist communication offers social identity cues that construct two social groups, which are pitted against one another to wit, the pure people and the evil elite. Adjusting Converse's own words to the notion of populist identity framing, the populist belief system is hence presented to the public as a natural whole in the sense of: "If you are a member of this group, than these groups are evil against you, for it follows in such-and-such ways."

Second, and inextricably linked with the first theoretical notion, I will make use of the social psychological insight that identity cues, as they are employed within populist communication, pave the way for group categorization processes (cf., Azrout & de Vreese, 2018; Hogg & Reid, 2006; Nicholson, 2012). Interestingly, Converse's own findings also pointed to a possible importance of respective social psychological mechanisms in belief systems. As was revealed, only the smallest share, namely, the most educated participants in Converse's surveys relied on the relatively abstract and far-reaching conceptual dimensions of belief systems when making judgements about specific political entities. In contrast to that, a much larger share of his participants evaluated policies, parties and candidates "in terms of their expected favorable or unfavorable treatment of different social groupings" (p. 14). He therefrom concludes, that "[these] people have a clear image of politics as an arena of group interests and, provided that they have been properly advised on where their own group interests lie, they are relatively likely to follow such advice" (p. 15). Aside the fact that, in this last quote, Converse implicitly repeats the importance of communication, he does not speak about the question of *why* most individuals should be so likely to follow these group cues. He merely notes that to the mass, groups as attitude objects appear to have higher centrality within belief systems (p. 40). Further, he assumes that cues concerning social groupings are sometimes so "gross" (p. 43) that they do not require much political sophistication to be encoded and adapted and hence, have it relatively easy to penetrate the whole population.

I argue that such group cues are indeed successful means of political communication, not necessarily because they are simple, but because they directly speak to an important part of the human nature. More specifically, these cues potentially resonate with social identities that represent a significant part of the individual self-concept. In applying knowledge about social psychological mechanisms as captured by a large corpus of research on the social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987) I attempt to fathom the psychological origins of constraints between different idea-elements within the populist belief system. In the specific case of populism, this social identity approach appears especially fruitful as the ideology is conveyed to the public via social identity framing. I will further outline these group divides within populism and populist communication in Chapter 2 and elaborate on its potential consequences on the individual level in Chapter 4. Essentially, these reflections result in a *social identity approach to populist attitudes* that can be consulted regarding the question of 'what causes beliefs to cluster in certain ways'.

Thus far, the explanations in the present chapter served to introduce the present project's general research question as well as the greater motivation to examine it. Moreover, the notion of political belief systems has briefly been outlined as it shall serve as a guiding principle through all upcoming analysis. With this, I finally turn to the specific research questions that shall be tackled.

RQ 1: Individual Level Support for Populism

It appears reasonable to start the investigation of the populist belief system with an examination of its core. Necessarily, this core has to embody the populist ideology itself. With the concept of populist attitudes the literature on demand side populism already makes a good proposal for a concept that aims to represent the ideology on the individual level. Populist attitudes are defined as the individual level support for populism, as the micro-level "affinity for populism" (Hawkins, Riding, & Mudde, 2012, p. 1), or as the "citizen demand for populism" (Hawkins & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014, p. 5).

The attitudinal dimension of populism has longtime been of subordinate importance to research on populism or as put by Ben Stanley, "…there is a paucity of data on attitudes that relate directly to the core tenets of populism" (2011, p. 257). This statement essentially addressed the absence of a measurement to populist attitudes. Even though the first attempt to measure populism on the individual level was published more than 50 years ago (Axelrod, 1967), decades went by until scholars regained interest in studying populism within the citizenry. Stanley himself (2011) was one of the first to reopen the debate about

public opinion measures to contemporary populism. His proposition was quickly followed by the introduction of a measurement to populist attitudes by Hawkins et al. (2012), which served as the base for the development of a six-item scale, tested and deployed by Agnes Akkerman and colleagues (Akkerman, Mudde, & Zaslove, 2014). This very scale is to date the most popular scale to populist attitudes (Castanho Silva, Andreadis et al., 2019) and has been implemented in a series of studies conducted to shed light onto the worldview of populist citizens (e.g., Jacobs, Akkerman, & Zaslove, 2018; Rico & Anduiza, 2017; Rico, Guinjoan, & Anduiza, 2017; Spierings & Zaslove, 2017; van Hauwaert & van Kessel, 2018). In this theses I argue that despite its popularity, this scale comes with several validity problems, which is why it might not be the most adequate instrument to measure populism on the individual level.

First, the instrument in question claims to measure individual level populism as a "set of ideas" (Akkerman et al., 2014, p. 1328), suggesting that the concept consists of different dimensions. Such conceptualizations, one would expect, should lead to multidimensional measurement specifications (cf., Castanho Silva, Andreadis, et al., 2019). However, Akkerman and Colleagues (2014) present a unidimensional measure that does not differentiate between possible subdimensions of populist attitudes on the empirical level. This specification makes it difficult to identify if the measurement represents all facets important to populism. For this reason, the scale's content validity has to be questioned. Content validity refers to the extent to which a measure is able to represent all dimensions of a given construct (Brosius, Koschel, & Haas, 2009). A prerequisite to establish and assess content validity is therefore to provide a clear and most importantly, extensive definition of a construct that refers to all elements necessary for the construct to be. Moreover, content validity is itself a prerequisite for other types of validity, namely, criterion and construct validity. If content validity is not given, measures fail to gauge the concept that they claim to gauge and scholars implementing the instrument in their studies run the risk of producing false and misleading findings, for example, about correlates to the concept. I argue that previous research might have relied upon an instrument to populist attitudes that cut short on at least one important component of the populist ideology, namely, the perception of the people as homogeneous and virtuous. Second, the scale has only been tested with an exploratory factor analysis. This analytical choice contradicts the idea behind the deductive approach that the authors have chosen in basing their measurement development on a definition to populism first. Specific measurement components were hypothesized but after all neither specified nor tested appropriately as exploratory factor analysis is no suita-

ble tool for that matter. Rather, a confirmatory factor analysis is needed to establish proof for a presumed measurement structure (Kline, 2011). At last, the scale has been developed within the context of only two countries, namely, the United States and the Netherlands. It has further been replicated in the Chilean context (Hawkins & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014). While the scale has by now been implemented in even more countries, it has never been evaluated whether the instrument actually works invariant across countries, that is, if it measures individual level populism similarly valid in different country contexts. However, measurement invariance is a necessary scale property if cross-country comparisons are planned. As the populist moment resides in many countries today, a measure to populist attitudes should thus suit the needs of comparative survey research and exhibit sufficient cross-country validity.

In order to do the best to avoid these different validity problems, this dissertation starts from scratch in developing a measurement to populist attitudes. The first specific research question is: ***How can populist attitudes be measured across countries? (RQ 1)***

I will make an effort to capture the superordinate posture as well as all core components of the populist belief system when developing a new measure for populist attitudes. As laid out above, a response to this question has to start with a definition to populism that emphasizes all components of which this concept is comprised of as well as the structure of the components' interrelations. This will be pursued in Chapter 2 in which populism will be defined as a political ideology. In Chapter 3 the concept of populist attitudes will be deduced, items will be developed that depict the different components and finally, the instrument will be put through different empirical tests (*Article I*). This work is of preparatory kind in that it develops a measurement to populist attitudes that will be implemented in all further studies of this dissertation. These further studies aim to provide insights into the wider populist belief system on the individual level. Likewise, these further studies serve as construct validity tests to the new inventory of populist attitudes.

RQ 2: Populist Citizens' Media and Public Opinion Perceptions

Going from there, this dissertation will turn to an investigation of the relationship between populist attitudes and the individual level perceptions of news media. Thus far no such study has been undertaken despite relentless rhetorical attacks against mainstream news organizations voiced by populist leaders and uncounted 'lie media' or 'fake news' accusations by populist followers. All of which have thus far only been documented within the daily news reporting, at demonstrations of populist movements or on social media (e.g.,

Holt & Haller, 2017) but not within quantitative analyses. It would, however, be of high importance to examine the relationship between populist attitudes and hostile media perceptions systematically, simply, to determine, whether these mediated snapshots indeed indicate something that has substance and hence, public significance, or whether these depictions are actually very few and random but overemphasized within the media reporting.

In contrast to the fierce public debate about a crisis in trust in public institutions, aggregate data analyses point to rather stagnant or even increasing media trust levels in different European countries, for example, the Netherlands, Germany, and Sweden (e.g., Edelman, 2018; Hanitzsch, van Dalen, and Steindl 2017; Newman, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos, Levy & Nielsen, 2018; Reinemann & Fawzi, 2016). However, it amounts to an ecological fallacy to directly transfer these aggregate findings onto the individual level. Rather, the results were the same, if citizens who support populism grow hostile media attitudes, while trust increases for those who disagree to populism. On the population level, no changes were identified, while on the level of groups significant differences went undiscovered. As will be outlined in the following, such differences in news media trust between different segments or groups within the population can be consequential in at least two different ways. Media distrust or negative attitudes toward the media can converge a) with differing perceptions of public opinion, and b) with different patterns of news consumption. Both consequences could foster societal polarization. I will briefly speak to both points in the following.

As to the first point, public opinion is ascribed the latent function of keeping society together (Noelle-Neumann, 2001). It is therefore deemed essential for a society that its individual members and entities perceive – at least to some degree – the same opinion as public opinion. Traditional communication science theory suggests that news reporting strongly influences the audiences' perceptions of public opinion (Mutz, 1998; Noelle-Neumann, 1974). This effect is broadly explained by the individuals' beliefs in media effects on others (e.g., Davison, 1983). Thus, in the moment in which mass media are acknowledged to influence the audiences' perception of the public opinion climate, they are recognized as an important actor within the process of societal integration.

A necessary condition for the mass media to fulfill this function is that the public trusts its reporting within which various types of public opinion cues are embedded. As was shown by a study in the Israeli context, media skeptics tended to reject the mediated climate of opinion while those who trusted the news evaluated public opinion generally in line with

the media's suggestions (Tsfati, 2003). On the one hand, this can be evaluated as desirable as these media skeptics hence appear to be critical consumers of information and do not simply believe what is presented to them at face value. On the other hand, this perceptual pattern can also be interpreted as a form of rigidity or "as shutting one's ears and eyes to reality" (Tsfati, 2003, p. 78). Thus, if populist citizens strongly distrusted the media, they could be expected to reject the mediated climate of opinion and with that, to reject the reality or horizon shared by the remainder of the population. Subsequently, societies were endangered to polarize along populist attitudes.

It is for these reasons that this dissertation aims to systematically examine the relationship between populist attitudes and media perceptions. In order to determine the consequences that this has for the individual estimation of public opinion, the present research will, in addition, investigate populist citizens' public opinion perceptions. The following second specific research question will therefore be investigated: ***How do populist attitudes relate to media and public opinion perceptions in different countries? (RQ 2)***

This investigation will be subject to Chapter 4. An important part of this chapter will be devoted to theoretical considerations regarding the mechanisms that could define and explain the relationships between populist attitudes, media perceptions and public opinion perceptions. To do so, I will reach out to the social identity perspective (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and introduce a social identity approach to populist attitudes. The posited relationships will be put to an empirical test based on a four country survey data set (*Article II*).

As to the second point noted above, differences in media trust can also be associated with different patterns of news consumption. Indeed, a series of studies support this notion showing, for example, an association between strong distrust in the news media and the preference for non-mainstream news media in several countries (Fletcher & Park, 2017; Tsfati & Ariely, 2014; Tsfati & Cappella, 2003, 2005). Following common concerns (e.g., Ladd, 2011), such news use patterns can be harmful to society in that they potentially contribute to polarizing it. I will further expand upon this point in the following and with that, turn to an examination of a potential behavioral dimension of the populist belief system.

RQ 3: Populist Citizens' News Preferences

As a final contribution, this dissertation seeks to investigate a behavioral dimension of the populist belief system, that is, the relationships between populist attitudes and news preferences. Thus, in contrast to the studies cited last, in which media trust was related to differ-

ent indicators of news consumption, this thesis seeks for direct associations between news consumption and populist attitudes. Only in directly linking populist attitudes to news choice the understanding about the repercussion of populism on the individual level can be enhanced. The essential assumption underlying this research interest is hence, that citizens with populist attitudes could seek out a specific news diet, not (only) because they distrust the news, but for the fact that they have populist attitudes.

This reasoning chimes with that of the rich body of selective exposure literature, according to which news readers have some intention to choose news that is congenial to their own opinions, beliefs and convictions (cf., Stroud, 2017). When investigating news choice in political contexts, selective exposure studies have most often examined issue attitudes (e.g., Garrett, 2009a) or political ideology (e.g., Stroud, 2008) as drivers to news exposure. By political ideology, these studies most often refer to the political left-right orientation of individuals (or liberal-conservative in the U.S. context). However, not least with the rise of populist parties, it is discussed whether this traditional continuum is still functional to describe today's political and societal structures. Rather, recent literature discusses a new cleavage as being just as or even more important to consider, that is, the divide between populists and cosmopolitan liberals (Bornschier, 2010; Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Kriesi, 2010). If citizens who support populism were found to select different types of news as compared to those who disagree to the populist ideology, evidence for this new division with respect to news audiences was established.

This scenario might become even more likely as recent developments within the media system have created perfect opportunity structures for selective exposure (van Aelst et al., 2017). Given the large range of news providers that individuals can chose from within today's high-choice media environments it has become fairly easy for anyone to find the news that corresponds best to the own worldview. It is a common concern that the erosion of the 'old mass media' and the establishment of new media will, sooner or later, drive societies apart and foster fragmentation (cf., Fletcher & Nielsen, 2017). However, despite the strong concerns with regard to the danger of populism and despite the repetitive prophesy of echo chambers and filter bubbles, the investigation of links between populist attitudes and news consumption is still in its infancy. It is an open question, if individuals choose news content depending on where they stand on the populist attitude continuum. For example, this could mean to gravitate toward specific partisan alternative media and away from traditional news provision.

To this point, only one study has related populist attitudes to individual news media preferences (Hameleers, Bos, & de Vreese, 2017b). This study established a link between anti-establishment attitudes and a preference for entertainment as well as for populist media content. However, the associations revealed with regard to specific news outlets appear rather counterintuitive. The study showed a positive relationship between anti-establishment populist attitudes and the use of a quality newspaper while no relation was found to reading a tabloid newspaper. The former are, however, thought to stand close to the political elite while the latter are presumed to provide more populist content (Mazzoleni, Stewart, & Horsfield, 2003). If anything, citizens with populist attitudes should therefore be expected to show a preference for tabloid rather than for quality newspapers. Moreover, the study was conducted in the Netherlands only and it is impossible to say, if these findings will replicate in other countries.

Therefore, the last specific research question of this dissertation is: ***How are populist attitudes related to news choice in different countries? (RQ 3)***

This question will be tackled within Chapter 5. First, two large scale multi country survey studies will be introduced that offer insights into the media diets of citizens with populist attitudes with regard to traditional mainstream news genres such as public TV news, private TV news, tabloid, and quality newspapers. Second, populist citizens exposure to specific online news providers, for example, alternative media or Facebook will be examined (*Article III* & *Article IV*).

Overview of Articles

To respond to the presented research questions of this dissertation four journal articles have been written. Below these articles are briefly summarized.

Article I: Schulz, A., Müller, P., Schemer, C., Wirz, D. S., Wettstein, M., & Wirth, W. (2018). Measuring populist attitudes on three dimensions. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research, 30*(2), 316—326. doi:10.1093/ijpor/edw037.

> Prior studies have offered unidimensional conceptualizations of populist attitudes despite the common understanding of populism as being an ideology that is set together by different political ideas. This article presents psychometric work that aims at developing a multidimensional measurement to populism able to grasp the different components that together comprise populism according to its definition: anti-elitist attitudes, a perception of the people as a homogeneous and virtuous group, and the individual pref-

erence for popular sovereignty. The measurement was successfully tested within two German data sets using exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. Moreover, the specified measurement model was also shown to be statistically superior to competing measurement models introduced by prior research.

Article II: Schulz, A., Wirth, W. & Müller, P. (2018). We are the people and you are Fake News. A social identity approach to populist citizens' hostile media and false consensus perceptions. *Communication Research,* 1—26. Advance online publication. doi:10.1177/00936 50218794854

This study empirically investigated the relationships between populist attitudes, media, and public opinion perceptions in a four country survey study. Results across countries provide robust evidence for strong associations between populist attitudes and hostile media perceptions as well as between populist attitudes and congruent public opinion perceptions. As media and public opinion perceptions were not found to be related to one another, the article concludes that – to populist citizens – the news media might no longer serve as a reference for public opinion estimates. Further, the study provides an extensive theoretical framework that attempts to explain for these findings. Namely, a social identity approach to populist attitudes is introduced according to which citizens who identify with the populist ideas and hence, identify with the people (as constructed by populism) are prone to follow hostile media cues as well as opinion majority cues, which are promoted by populist leaders. The approach claims, that the populist leader functions as a stereotypical in-group member or a role model in this process. In-group members of the people could be motivated to adhere to the thinking and behavior promoted by the group leader in order to qualify as valuable members of the group. This can foster self-enhancement. Moreover, the article identifies further psychological mechanisms that potentially contribute to populist citizens' news and public opinion perceptions. Specifically, the article integrates populist citizens' hostile media perceptions and congruent public opinion perceptions into the hostile media effect and false consensus literatures.

Article III: Schulz, A. (2019). Where populist citizens get the news: An investigation of news audience polarization along populist attitudes in 11 countries. *Communication Monographs, 86*(1), 88–111. doi:10.1080/03637751.2018.1508876

This two study paper investigated populist citizens' news media preferences in 11 countries and in two different points in time. The main aim was to examine, if the audiences

of tabloid newspapers, private TV news, online only news as well as Facebook are more populist than the audiences of quality newspapers and public TV news. Both studies provided evidence for a strong reliance on private TV news by citizens with strong populist attitudes. To a smaller extent, but still visible, populist citizens also tended to prefer tabloid newspapers. Against the expectations, populist citizens showed no clear avoidance tendencies toward quality newspapers or public service TV news.

Article IV: Müller, P. & Schulz A. (2019). Alternative media for a populist audience? Exploring political and media use predictors of exposure to Breitbart, Sputnik, and Co. *Information, Communication & Society.* Advance online publication. doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2019.1646778

Alongside the recent rise of political populism a new type of partisan alternative media has surfaced within the past years. These outlets promote an anti-elitist discourse that speaks to the populist narrative. This study investigates psychological, socio-demographic and media-use predictors of frequent and occasional exposure to different alternative media with an affinity to populism (AMP). 1346 German Internet users were surveyed in 2017 to shed light on this question. Results indicate that frequent users of AMP hold strong populist attitudes and have a higher probability to vote for the German populist party AfD. Frequent AMP users might hence be politically motivated to access these specific partisan news websites.

Chapter 2 : The Populist Ideology

This chapter introduces a definition for populism as a political ideology what encloses a discussion of the core features that constitute the ideology. I will also speak about the understanding of populism as identity politics (cf., J.-W. Müller, 2016) to illustrate that an identity building potential is firmly rooted within the ideology itself. This work is of preliminary kind and sets the stage for Chapter 3, in which I zoom in on the concept of populist attitudes that will directly be derived from the populist ideology.

A Thin-Centered Ideology

In trying to understand the phenomenon of populism researchers have used different approaches to the concept. At least six such approaches are regularly identified within the contemporary literature on populism (see Pappas, 2016 who has identified even more). Populism has been defined as an ideology (e.g., Abts & Rummens, 2007; Mudde, 2004), as a political strategy (e.g., Weyland, 2001), as a discourse (e.g., Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013; Hawkins, 2009), as a political logic (e.g., Laclau, 2005), as a political style (e.g., Jagers & Walgrave, 2007; Moffitt, 2016), and as a movement (e.g., Jansen, 2011). In the past years, consensus has been reached among populism scholars regarding the so called *ideational approach* to populism (Hawkins, Carlin, Littvay, & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2019). This approach encloses all definitions to the concept that acknowledge that populism incorporates "a substantive message that should be distinguished from related but different phenomena" (Rooduijn, 2018, p. 3). This message is best summarized by Cas Mudde, who defined populism as:

> "an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be the expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people" (2004, p. 543, 2007).

With this definition, populism is identified as a *thin-centered ideology* (Mudde, 2004, p. 544). This notion emphasizes that the ideology is restricted to a set of core ideas, rather than that it contains "interpretations and configurations of all the major political concepts attached to a general plan of public policy that a specific society requires" (Freeden, 1998, p. 750; cf., Stanley, 2008). The latter would be true for *full ideologies* such as nationalism or socialism from which populism is to be distinguished (Mudde, 2004).

That thin character of populism[3] is interesting for at least two different reasons. First, this feature of populism makes the populist ideology an interesting case for the study of political belief systems (Converse, 2006). Following Mudde, populism as a thin-centered ideology "does not possess 'the same level of intellectual refinement and consistency' as, for example, socialism or liberalism" (2004, p. 544). Rather, the different idea-elements that together constitute the phenomenon are only few, each straightforward and simple to understand. It is a reasonable assumption that this type of ideology therefore seeps through the whole population with relative ease as compared to full ideologies. This should be true all the more as the ideology itself pronounces clear group identities to which participants in Converse's own studies referred to fairly consistently. The definition given above prominently sets the group of the 'pure people' against the group of the 'corrupt elite' – with both of these groups being homogeneous. As also emphasized by Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, "all manifestations of populism are based on the moral distinction between 'pure people and 'the corrupt elite' " (2013, p. 151). I will understand this normative antagonism between the good people and the evil elite as the *superordinate posture* (cf. Converse, 2006) or the most central premise within the populist belief system from which further elements of the ideology can emanate. In this regard it appears quite fitting that the literature on populism refers to this aspect of populism as its "Manichean *outlook*" (e.g., Mudde, 2004, p. 544; emphasis added). According to this notion, the populist worldview only allows for friends and foes but for nothing in-between. All further societal and political entities (policies, institutions, politicians, etc.) are arranged along this antagonism as either belonging to the good people's side or to the side of the evil elites. In that sense, the Manichean outlook of populism represents what Converse referred to as the *natural law* or the *sort of glue* that binds together many idea-elements thereby forming a belief system. Importantly, some of these further elements are to be considered necessary or constituent elements of populism, while again others can be added to the concept in the sense of "accompanying properties" (Sartori, 1984, 55f.) and will differ depending on the concrete political context in which a particular populism is investigated.

Second, defining populism as a thin ideology enabled comparative investigations of the phenomenon. Throughout history, populism has been identified in almost all countries across all continents and it appeared (and appears) in so many different shapes that it has at times been difficult to recognize the phenomenon empirically and to distinguish it from

[3] When I use the term populism in this study, I will always refer to the thin populist ideology.

other political currents. In this respect Taggart (2000) referred to populism as chameleonic. In early discussions of populism it was even doubted possible to find a single, unifying approach to populism that is applicable across countries and time (e.g., Canovan, 1981). But defining populism as a thin ideology limits the phenomenon's scope to very few ideas. These ideas are understood to represent the lowest common denominator of populist movements, policies, parties, politicians, and also citizens, what should allow for the empirical measurement and comparison of populism across globe, time, and entities (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013; Rooduijn, 2014a). Thus, if these core ideas are found to be present in any empirical investigation, populism is identified. Most importantly, this approach is still applicable, if a specific populist phenomenon is found to be accompanied by additional ideologies, what is indeed the rule rather than the exception. These additional ideologies drive populism into a specific political direction, for example, into the right wing or left wing of politics. Most studies on populism conducted in the Western hemispheres investigate right-wing populism as this is the manifestation of populism that occurs most frequently within the respective countries' political realities (e.g., Bos, Sheets, & Boomgaarden, 2018; Marquart & Matthes, 2016; Mudde, 2007; Wirz et al., 2018). Studies on left-wing manifestations of populism traditionally focus on Latin American countries (e.g., Ruth, 2018; Weyland, 2001) but were also conducted in the European context (e.g., Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014; Wirz, 2018a). What most of these studies have in common is that they identify populism as a small set of ideas that can be extended. Against the backdrop of point one and point two, it is apparent that the idea-elements that are thought to be necessary to constitute thin populism need to be properly defined. I will introduce these specific ideas in the following.

Populist Idea-Elements

While there is wide agreement between different populism scholars as to the ideational approach to populism, it is still open to debate, which components[4] actually build this ideology's core. In a recent article, Rooduijn (2018) maps the state of the art in populism research and refers to *at least* two components of which populism consists: *people-centrism* and *anti-elitism*. These components neatly meet the ends of the antagonism described above: the first refers to the pure people, the second to the evil elite. While there is generally consent as to what is meant by the anti-elitism component, dissent can be identified when inspect-

[4] In this study I use the terms components, features, ideas, elements, idea-elements, and subdimensions interchangeably.

ing how people-centrism is approached by different scholars. Some scholars seem to focus on the matter of *popular sovereignty* when referring to the role of the people in populism (e.g., Akkerman et al., 2014; Castanho Silva, Andreadis et al., 2019), others refer to the *centrality and character of the people* (Bos, van der Brug, & de Vreese, 2010; Cranmer, 2011; Jagers & Walgrave, 2007; Rooduijn & Pauwels, 2011). However, looking at the definition proposed above, both interpretations should be considered necessary elements of populism as otherwise the concept cannot be considered to be fully described. Populism as defined by Cas Mudde makes an explicit statement about the nature of the people (i.e., they are homogeneous and pure) and it makes an additional explicit statement about the way how politics should be run (i.e., it should follow the will of the people). In the following, I will therefore focus on populism as a thin-ideology that comprises three key components: (1) anti-elitism, (2) homogeneity and virtuousness of the people, and (3) popular sovereignty (for equal deductions see Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2015; March, 2017; van Kessel, 2015; Wirth et al., 2016).

Anti-Elitism. As stated above, most scholars on populism agree that populism holds a strong negative stance toward the elite. As summarized by Wirth et al. (2016) the literature on populism describes the elite in populism as "corrupt", "exploitative", as "the enemies of the people" (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008, p. 4), as "evil" and "conspiring" (Hawkins, 2009, p. 1042), as "unaccountable" and "incompetent" (Mény & Surel, 2002, p. 9) and so forth. Evidently, all attributions to the elite are connoted negatively. What is less clear among scholars on populism is the question of *who* belongs to the elite. Jagers and Walgrave have mapped the most complete list of actors that could be considered to be a part of it: "Elites can be political elites (parties, government, ministers, etc.), but also the media (media tycoons, journalists, etc.), the state (administration, civil service), intellectuals (universities, writers, professors) or economic powers (multinationals, employers, trade unions, capitalists)" (2007, p. 324). However, as the present study investigates thin populism, the elite against which populism opposes shall be limited to the *political elite* only. If this particular elite is not rejected thin populism cannot be identified. The rejection of other types of elites will be understood as additional features that can be part of populism and that shape specific subtypes of populism (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013) but which do not belong to its core in the sense of constitutive features. For example, if populism vents its anger not only against the political elite, but also against the wealthy elite a form of left-wing populism is present. If the media are the target elite, anti-media populism is identified

(Krämer, 2018). As this thesis is occupied with the investigation of the relationship between populism and the media, I will get back to this particular elite further below.

Homogeneity and Virtuousness of the People. In thin populism the political elite is set against the unity of the pure people. Undeniably, this group is essential for populism. If it was not for the people, populism had no purpose. Similar to the elite concept, it is rather clear *how* the people are, but not necessarily *who* they are. According to a summary provided in Wirth et al. (2016), populism scholars agree on exclusively positive characteristics, which are attributed to the populist people. They are depicted as "inherently good" and "paramount" (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008, p. 6). Moreover, they are said to act according to "common sense" (Taggart, 2000, p. 95) what in its consequence leads to the people sharing the same values, preferences, and interests (J.-W. Müller, 2016). Importantly, these attributes are assigned to all members of the group of the people what results in this group being, above all, defined as homogeneous. The definition of *who* the people are, however, hinges upon the explicit manifestation of populism. While the thin-centered ideology leaves the concept of the people vague or an "empty vessel" (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013, p. 151), in right-wing populism, the people are defined as those who hold a specific nationality or share the same ethnos (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2015). In left-wing populism, the people are referred to as a class (e.g., the working class or the ordinary people) that struggles against privileged elites (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013).

Popular Sovereignty. At last, the populist ideology emphasizes popular sovereignty as "the only legitimate source of political power" (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013, p. 151). Populism denounces the current state in which the ruling political elite 'pulls the strings', thereby defrauding the people of their right to make own decisions. Populism sees the only right way to free and empower the people in imposing unrestricted popular sovereignty. It is particularly this element of populism that leads scholars to review the phenomenon as potentially harmful to liberal or constitutional democracies. In its extreme form, popular sovereignty as demanded by populism implies unrestrained majority rule, that is, majority rule at the expenses of liberal democratic elements and/or minority rights (Abts & Rummens, 2007; Mudde, 2004; Waisbord, 2018).

It is worth noting, that some authors on populism list further elements as central components of populism. Most notably, Jagers and Walgrave (2007; see also Hameleers & de Vreese, 2018) add the idea of exclusionism as a "third constitutive feature of populism" (p. 324), next to people-centrism and anti-elitism. This idea-element refers to segments of the

population that are neither part of the elite nor part of the people. Rather these groups, which are often also referred to as the "dangerous others" (e.g., Rooduijn, 2014a, p. 727) are excluded from the people on a horizontal level (while the elite is excluded vertically) in being defined as "a threat to and a burden on society" (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007, p. 324). As it appears difficult to think of a respective group that is horizontally excluded in left-wing populism, the present study understands this feature as one that is particularly relevant in right-wing populism, were these 'others' are most often immigrants or asylum seekers (e.g., Jagers & Walgrave, 2007). Hence, this component is not understood as a necessary feature of thin populism in the present study.

Moreover, and mainly the case in demand-side studies, the Manichean outlook of populism is often also treated as one component among others, that is, as set on the same level next to anti-elitism and people-centrism (Castanho Silva, Andreadis et al., 2019; Hawkins et al., 2012; Spruyt et al., 2016). As was explained above, the present study understands this dimension as a posture of paramount order within the populist belief system. That is, as something that underlies and impacts the nature of more specific/less abstract dimensions of populism. This concerns both, the necessary dimensions of populism (i.e., those that comprise the core of the belief system and were described above), as well as additional features to populism (i.e., those that concern related attitudes, perceptions and behavior within in the belief systems periphery). It is this very posture of populism via which the phenomenon can be identified as a form of identity politics.

Populism as Identity Politics

As was identified above, the Manichean outlook of populism represents the most central posture within the populist belief system. By confronting the group of the people with the group of the political elite, the ideology sets out to view society and all politics in binary and agonistic terms (Waisbord, 2018). The promoted social structure is very definite and simple and often paraphrased as 'us versus them' or 'black and white' or, maybe most fitting, as this paraphrase also captures the normative dimension of populism, as 'good and bad'. Indeed, the two groups that play a role in populism are by no means conceived of as neutral but rather, the people is understood to be admirable while the elite is described as dangerous and malevolent. In the moment in which populism recognizes that the elite threatens and suppresses the people it identifies a state of injustice that surrounds the latter group.

With that, populism meets all criteria needed to call it *a form of identity politics* (J.-W. Müller, 2016, p. 3; see also Marchlewska, Cichocka, Panayiotou, Castellanos, & Batayneh, 2018). According to Heyes (2018), identity politics signify political activity "founded in the shared experience of injustice of members of certain groups." Moreover, "identity political formations typically aim to secure the political freedom of a specific constituency marginalized within its larger context. Members of that constituency assert or reclaim ways of understanding their distinctiveness that challenge dominant oppressive characterizations, with the goal of greater self-determinations". In populism, the people form the marginalized constituency and the dominant oppression is led by the political elite and established politics. Greater self-determination shall be enabled via the implementation of popular sovereignty. Populism advocates only one group in particular and therefore it promotes politics that promise an advantage to this group only, thereby ignoring the interests of others. In line with this argument, populism has been identified to be anti-pluralist (e.g., Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2015).

Important for populism as identity politics (or any other identity politics) is the public diffusion of the relevant group categories. This is also true when seen from Converse's perspective on belief systems. As was stated in Chapter 1, information about the composition of a belief system needs to be distributed so that the mass public can internalize the different constraints composing such systems. In this regard, literature on populist communication considers social identity framing as a central means to promote the binary populist worldview (Hameleers, Bos, Fawzi et al., 2018). Thereby, populist identity frames are defined as a) emphasizing "a threat to the ingroup of the people, who are perceived as relatively worse off than other groups in society" (p. 4) and b) as presenting "multiple [outgroups] that threaten the people from above (the elites) and within (the others)" (p. 5). Put differently, populist communication contains social identity cues that construct the people as an attractive (i.e., virtuous) and unfairly threatened in-group and it invites individuals to identify with this group. Moreover, populist communication displays the elite as a dangerous and malevolent out-group and advices individuals to be skeptical about this group. What shall be emphasized here is that directly within the populist ideology there roots an identity building potential that can be expressed as identity framing and play out as identity politics.

Drawing back on social psychological terminology it can be specified that populist communication offers social categories that, if salient, can trigger social categorization processes (cf., Hogg & Reid, 2006). Following insights coming from research on the social identity

theory, the human nature is indeed very conducive to such group cues what potentially makes respective communication very successful (see also, Azrout & de Vreese, 2018; Nicholson, 2012). Concerning populism, we could expect that individuals start to self-categorize (i.e., to identify) as members of the in-group of the people. This can have many micro level consequences regarding how these individuals perceive the world and how they act upon it. Chapter 4 will outline this self-categorization mechanism that potentially sparks from populist communication in further depth and introduce a social identity approach to populist attitudes. Further, consequences of the self-categorization as a member of the people with regard to media and public opinion perceptions will be determined. Chapter 5 will investigate the news preferences of citizens who identify with the populist ideology.

Such considerations and investigations must be considered extremely relevant as, assuming that populist identity politics is successful, societal polarization along the conflict lines promoted via populism becomes highly likely. Following Kriesi et al. (2006; cf., Bornschier, 2010) a comparable conflict line has already emerged in the party politics of different Western countries. This cleavage has also been described by others who have identified it to divide cosmopolitan liberalism from populism (Inglehart & Norris, 2016). That is, populism is said to separate politics and citizens who embrace (or are able to embrace) the possibilities of globalization and who "favor pluralistic forms of governance based on respect for the protection of minority rights and checks and balances in decision-making processes" (Inglehart & Norris, 2016, p. 17) from those citizens who embrace closure (cf., J.-W. Müller, 2016) and who have "faith in the 'decent', 'ordinary' or 'little' people over the corrupt political and corporate establishment" (Inglehart & Norris, 2016, p. 17). I will now turn to Chapter 3, which is devoted to the development of a survey measurement that aims to identify those latter citizens, who are in this thesis referred to as *populist citizens* and who can be considered as particularly receptive and susceptible to populist identity politics.

Chapter 3 : Populist Attitudes

In this chapter I will explore in more detail the concept of populist attitudes. This concept has been used in previous studies to identify those who support the populist ideology or rather, those who agree to the core components of the populist belief system. The main motivation behind studies focusing on populist attitudes is to learn more about the demand for populism on the individual level and to understand whether and how micro level support for populism is interlinked with the pervasiveness of contemporary populism. Central to this aim is the question how populist attitudes can be measured (RQ 1).

When this thesis started out five years ago, articles on populist attitudes commonly regretted that the majority of studies on populism were supply side investigations. For example, Hawkins and colleagues stated: "[We] still have little sense of which people actually hold populist ideas, or how ideas held at the individual level might lead to mass outcomes" (2012, p. 1). This very quote points to two subfields within the study of populist attitudes that I have already identified in Chapter 1. To briefly reiterate, the first subfield concerns the question of how to identify citizens who agree to populism and is, hence, mainly occupied with the development of a survey measure for populist attitudes. Research dealing with this question currently debates the components that need to be measured in order to extensively depict the citizen support for populism as well as the adequate model specification and aggregation method (cf., Castanho Silva, Helbling, Jungkunz, & Littvay, 2019; Wuttke, Schimpf, & Schoen, unpublished draft). The second subfield concerns research that applies populist attitude scales to zoom in on potential consequences that the internalization of these attitudes by the individual might have. The present Chapter focuses on the first subfield, while Chapter 4 and 5 will reflect the second subfield in a communication science perspective.

Below, I will offer a review of the literature that has been occupied with respective measurement developments and set a focus on three publications that have inspired the present study's own scale development. I will then turn to this very scale development and introduce it referring to *Article I* as well as to an additional paper that has tested the developed measurement for its invariance across countries (Wettstein et al., 2019). At last, I will point to a selection of further scale developments that were undertaken parallel to or following the one presented here in order to give a more complete overview about the state of the art in research on this topic. In the same spirit, I will refer to open questions and debates within the field of populist attitudes measures.

1st Generation Measurements

Chapter 1 offered first insights into how contemporary populism research started the debate regarding survey measurements approximately ten years ago. In this respect, three publications clearly deserve mention as they set the starting point for a debate that has, until today, produced at least 17 different measurements to populist attitudes (see Table 2): Stanley (2011), Hawkins, Riding and Mudde (2012)[5], and Akkerman, Mudde and Zaslove (2014).[6] I will refer to these scales as the 1st generation of populist attitude measures.[7]

These scholars all apply the ideological approach to populism and refer to the definition brought forward by Cas Mudde introduced above. All three studies are frequently cited in demand side investigations of populism and at the moment of writing, the measurement introduced by Akkerman et al. (2014) is the most frequently applied measurement to populist attitudes (cf., Castanho Silva, Andreadis et al., 2019). I will briefly summarize these studies in the following and thereby discuss their achievements, but also diverse problems within these studies that have particularly motivated the present study's own measurement development.

Stanley (2011) identifies four components of populism: the existence of two homogeneous groups (the people and the elite), the agonistic relationship between these two groups, the positive valorization of the people and the denigration of the elite, as well as the idea of popular sovereignty (p. 258). If this set of ideas is compared with the dimensions identified in the definition for populism above they seem to line up completely. Although Stanley chose to structure and name the dimensions differently as proposed in Chapter 2, they perfectly match the dimensions that were identified above.

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[5] The publication by Hawkins, Riding and Mudde (2012) can be understood as the publication of the Hawkins and Riding (2010) conference paper, which is also sometimes cited as the original publication of the survey items (e.g., van Hauwaert et al., 2019).

[6] Akkerman et al. (2014) also review a rather early measurement development by Elchardus and Spruyt (2012). At the time, however, this study was published in Dutch only and as Akkerman et al. judge the measure to tap "into broader anti-establishment sentiments" (p. 1329) rather than measuring populism per se, I am not considering it here among the initial studies on populist attitude scales.

[7] Admittedly, there is also what could be called a generation zero of very early attempts to measure populist attitudes that served as a point of reference for the measures that were introduced in the years between 2011 and 2014. To these belong Axelrod (1967) and Farrell and Laughlin (1976). These two publications were important as they were the first to conceive populism as a micro level phenomenon (cf., van Hauwaert et al. (2019). However, their understanding of populism differs strongly from that of contemporary populism research and is commonly regarded as dated or, in the case of Axelrod, to U.S. centric (cf., Akkerman et al., 2014). I am therefore not going into further details of these publications.

In his empirical take, Stanley chooses two items for each component and enters these items as separate predictors in multiple linear regression analyses predicting party preferences and voting behavior in the 2010 Slovak election. He finds that populist attitudes as measured in his study explain neither of these outcomes. Among the reasons that could account for these non-expected findings, Stanley discusses potential flaws in his measurement. Specifically, he assumes that the items might not have captured populism and suggests broadening the "general palette of survey questions" (p. 269). Indeed, two items per dimension might not be sufficient to fully display the subdimensions of populist attitudes. To this critique, one might want to add that multicollinearity could also have caused the non-significances as Stanley seems to have entered all items (which supposedly measure the same latent construct) as individual predictors into regression analyses. In effect, the non-significances could indicate that the variables have indeed a lot in common and hence, take each other's variance. Unfortunately, Stanley does not provide any further statistical information about his measurement (e.g., correlations between the items, factor analyses and so forth).

Hawkins et al. (2012) as well as Akkerman et al. (2014) approached differently. First of all, they extract three key dimensions of populism from the ideational definition. They focus on the Manichaean view of politics, on the notion of popular sovereignty as well as on an opposition to the elite. In contrast to Stanley, the set of ideas identified by these two author teams thus lacks one component important to the definition, that is, the conception of the people as homogeneous and virtuous, which is not listed as a distinct feature of populism in these two publications. This is surprising, given the centrality that the concept of the people has for populism, also according to these authors themselves. For example, Akkerman et al. (2014) declare the concept of the people as the "starting point" (p. 1327) of populism. However, the six item set proposed by Akkerman et al. (2014) which was built upon the work by Hawkins et al. (2012) does not contain items that describe the people as homogeneous, pure, or virtuous. Regarding the measurement's construct validity, skepticism is therefore warranted.

The authors then continue and test the measurement within an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) including several other items tapping for additional concepts with the aim to show, that populist attitudes are distinct from other attitudes such as pluralism, stealth democracy, specific issue stances (Hawkins et al, 2012) or pluralism and elitism (Akkerman et al., 2014). This aim is very reasonable, because at the time, populist attitudes were a relatively new concept within the political science literature. Factor analysis was the right means to show that the measures "are getting at a coherent, underlying set of ideas (…) that is dis-

tinct from traditional political ideologies" (Hawkins et al., 2012. p. 14). Moreover, both studies made efforts and succeeded in validating the scales by testing whether they are consistently linked to sociodemographic variables and partisan attributes (Hawkins et al., 2012) as well as to populist party preferences (Akkerman et al., 2014). In doing so, these publications have laid the foundations for many future studies on the topic and have done nothing less but established the concept of populist attitudes in the literature.

However, when judged from today's point of view the application of exploratory factor analyses as well as the results that they produced prove difficult. First, in the case of both studies, the analyses established a single factor for populist attitudes what does not necessarily provide evidence for the concept's multidimensionality, which is however implied by referring to populism and populist attitudes as "a set of ideas" (Hawkins et al., 2012, p. 3; Akkerman et al., 2014, p. 1328). Second, in order to examine multidimensionality, confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) are more appropriate as compared to EFA. Thus, these studies implicitly hypothesize specific measurement components but do not test for them appropriately.

At last, all three publications report single country studies and it is difficult to say, if the respective measurements work equally across countries. Stanley (2011) started out in Slovakia, Hawkins et al. (2012) investigated different surveys conducted in the U.S. and Akkerman et al., (2014) set out in the Netherlands. Even though the six item scale as proposed by Akkerman et al. has in the meantime been implemented also in many other countries, it has never been tested, if it measures populist attitudes invariantly.

To summarize, the scales that were used to measure populist attitudes when the present study itself set out on studying populism are problematic for different reasons. While Stanley's (2011) approach acknowledges the concept's multidimensionality also on the empirical level, he does not generate a scale but uses individual items as proxies for different components (cf., van Hauwaert et al., 2019). And while Hawkins et al. (2012) as well as Akkerman et al. (2014) each employs several items to tap for the subdimensions of populist attitudes, their measurement proposal a) does not tap for the perception of the people as homogeneous and virtuous and b) does not acknowledge the multidimensionality of the concept within the empirical analyses. Moreover, nothing is known about either of these scales measurement equivalence properties. It were these deficits that motivated the scale development of the present dissertation that I am now to present.

A Hierarchical Three-Dimensional Measurement

In the present thesis, the populist ideology is examined as a political belief system. A Manichean outlook, according to which politics is seen as a struggle between the 'good people' and the 'evil elite' was set as this belief system's superordinate posture from which further idea-elements of the belief system emanate. Anti-elitism, the perception of the people as a homogeneous and virtuous entity, and agreement to popular sovereignty were identified as the three idea-elements that are closest to this central posture, together, constituting the belief systems core. If populist attitudes are defined as the support for the populist ideology on the individual level, they need to be understood as being composed of all of these elements. Accordingly, if we were to say that a person holds populist attitudes, that person needed to exhibit a Manichean outlook on politics and society, she or he needed to agree to anti-elitism, to the idea of popular sovereignty and to the homogeneity and virtuousness perceptions of the people. In this thesis a measure to populist attitudes is introduced and tested that accounts for all of these demands. This measurement is introduced in full detail in *Article I* (Appendix A). I will briefly summarize this publication as well as a further article in which the proposed scale was put to a measurement equivalence test in 11 countries (Wettstein et al., 2019). In addition, I seek to apply the idea of a populist belief system to the measurement, what has not been a part of *Article I* itself. These analytical steps were undertaken in order to respond the first specific research question of this thesis: How can populist attitudes be measured across countries? (RQ 1)

Results Article I

Against the background of the presented literature review *Article I* sets out with the following hypothesis:

A1-H1:[8] *Populist attitudes can be conceptualized as a latent second-order factor with three distinct subdimensions, namely, anti-elitism attitudes, a strong demand for popular sovereignty, and an understanding of the people as being homogenous and virtuous.*

Figure 2 displays the path diagram that results from this hypothesis. As can be seen, the proposed measurement model is reflective (Sommer, 2017), hierarchical as well as three-dimensional. This specification implies that the second-order factor is thought to have a causal impact on the three first-order factors that are themselves thought to influence the individual reactions on different indicator variables. This measurement design corresponds well to the populist belief system outlined above. Parallel to how the Manichean outlook is thought to inform further idea-elements within the populist belief system, the second-order latent variable informs the three subdimensions in the model. Importantly, only the indicator items are measured directly. The specification implies that the first-order latent variables capture information (i.e., variance) that the respective indicator variables have in common. Likewise, the second-order latent variable is thought to capture information, that the three first-order latent variables share.

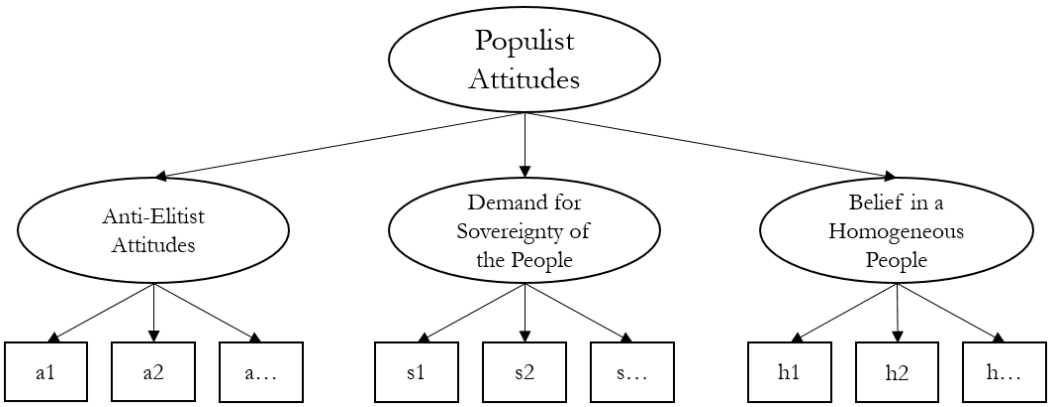

Figure 2. Path diagram of a hierarchical three-dimensional measurement model.

[8] The hypothesis are counted as follows in this thesis: In *A1-H1* the A1 points to the article in which this hypothesis was tested. *A1-* is *Article I*, *A2-* is *Article II*, and so forth. The *-H1* indicates the number of the hypothesis as it was assigned in the original article. I did not chose to renumber the hypotheses in order to make it easier for the reader to find the original hypothesis in the original articles.

The second-order latent factor can only be interpreted as representing the Manichean outlook, if the indicators slated to tap for the three subdimensions mutually refer to this concept. This of course, next to a reference to the concept that they are uniquely thought to display. Put differently, indicators are needed that can tap distinctly for yet one of the three subdimensions (anti-elitism, popular sovereignty, homogeneity and virtuousness of the people) and in addition to that also cover the Manichean outlook of politics in pitting the group of the people against the group of the elite.

Article I set out to collect items that can account for these demands. Partially, the gathered items stem from previously published scales (as cited above), partially, they were informed by research on entitativity and in-group homogeneity (Carpenter & Radhakrishnan, 2002; Lickel et al., 2000; Quattrone & Jones, 1980). The initial item pool comprised 21 items. Nine items reflected anti-elitism attitudes (anti), six items taped for a demand for popular sovereignty (sov) and another six items were sought out to depict the individual perception of the people as homogeneous and virtuous (hom). Among these last six items, three referred to the people as "the ordinary people" as this is more common in left-wing populism, while the remaining three items referred to the notion of the people as a nation, for example, as "the Swiss" or "the Germans". As the aim is to measure thin populism, both interpretations of the people need to be covered as otherwise, the instrument could be discussed as tilting toward the political left or right. Moreover, in several of these items the evil elite is directly pitted against the good people what captures the populist Manichean outlook on politics and society.

To turn these 21 items into a scale that would follow the posited hierarchical, three-dimensional structure two online surveys were conducted in the Swiss context. Survey I was fielded in December 2014 in the German speaking part of Switzerland (N = 400). Survey II was conducted in April 2015, and based on a sample taken from the metropolitan area of Zurich (N = 1260). Several tests were run on these data.

First, the 21 items were entered into an EFA that was run on each dataset. Items were excluded if communalities or factor loadings were too low or when items loaded on more than one factor. As a first confirmation for the proposed multidimensional structure, this exploratory analysis already revealed the proposed three-dimensionality regarding the first-order latent factors. The remaining 15 items were then entered into a CFA to also test for the proposed hierarchical and multidimensional structure of populist attitudes. The first test indicated an acceptable fit. After the removal of further three items following the mod-

ification indices, the model fit reached a satisfactory degree with all items exhibiting substantial loadings on the first-order latent variables. For each of the three subdimensions, four indicators were identified. Moreover, the first-order latents themselves showed significant loadings on the proposed second-order latent variable. This result confirmed the assumption that populist attitudes are a latent higher-order construct made up of the lower-order dimensions of anti-elitism attitudes, a preference for unrestricted popular sovereignty, and a belief in the homogeneity and virtuousness of the people.

Further, it can carefully be implied that the second-order latent factor indeed captures the Manichean outlook of populism. However, as the analyses led to the exclusion of all items that depicted the Manichean outlook on the hom-subdimension, skepticism is warranted. Table 1 lists all items that remained in the scale. As can be seen, no item tapping for the perception of the people as a homogeneous and virtuous group mutually refers to the people *and* the elite. Rather all four hom-items make a reference to the people only. Interestingly, it is also this very dimension that shows the lowest loading onto the second-order factor as compared to the other two subdimensions. While this can have many reasons, it can be assumed that this dimension lacks one important communality with the other dimensions, that is, the reference to the Manichean outlook of populism.

Table 1. English items comprising the final IPA as suggested in Article I.

	Item	Manichean Outlook	Wording
anti-elitism	anti1	Yes	MPs in Parliament very quickly lose touch with ordinary people.
	anti2	Yes	The differences between ordinary people and the ruling elite are much greater than the differences between ordinary people.
	anti3	No	People like me have no influence on what the government does.
	anti5	No	Politicians talk too much and take too little action.
demand for popular sovereignty	sov1	No	The people should have the final say on the most important political issues by voting on them directly in referendums.
	sov2	No	The people should be asked whenever important decisions are taken.
	sov3	Yes	The people, not the politicians, should make our most important policy decisions.
	sov4	Yes	The politicians in Parliament need to follow the will of the people.
homogeneity & virtuousness of the people	hom1	No	Ordinary people all pull together.
	hom2	No	Ordinary people are of good and honest character.
	hom3	No	Ordinary people share the same values and interests.
	hom4	No	Although the [Swiss] are very different from each other, when it comes down to it they all think the same.

Note. anti – anti-elitism; sov – popular sovereignty; hom – homogeneity and virtuousness of the people
The items were measured on 5pt Likert scales ranging from 1 – *strongly disagree* to 5 – *strongly agree.*

However, the three subdimensions still shared sufficient variance as the model fitted the data well across both surveys and further, also the loadings for the hom-component onto the second-order factor still reached levels above .500. Moreover, the developed measure passed additional tests that were set up to corroborate the construct validity of the proposed conceptualization. First, the hierarchical three-dimensional specification was tested against the unidimensional approach followed by Akkerman et al. (2014). This test clearly indicated that the former and actually more complex measurement specification outperformed the unidimensional, less complex measurement according to different model fit indices. Second, it was shown that populist attitudes are distinct from elitism and pluralism attitudes. *Article I* therefrom concludes: "These results provide evidence that the present conception of populism is a valid construct that is distinct from other conceptions of democracy, that is, elitism and pluralism" (p. 7). For the remainder of this dissertation, this developed inventory for populist attitudes will be abbreviated with IPA (Inventory for Populist Attitudes).

I will now turn to the measurement equivalence test of the measurement as reported in Wettstein et al. (unpublished draft) that further validated the instrument with regard to its cross-national and construct validity in 11 countries.

Measurement Invariance Test

In a further study (Wettstein et al., 2019) the IPA was tested for measurement equivalence. Measurement equivalence (or measurement invariance) is considered an essential scale property when conducting comparative research (Davidov, 2009). If a scale possesses this property it is said to be able to measure the same (latent) concept equally well in different cultural or other contexts. A property as such appears especially important when populism is investigated. Since the populist *Zeitgeist* was identified to have enveloped much of Europe and the American continent, scholars are asking to what extent the public has come to embrace populism and if this differs across countries (Rooduijn, 2017; van Hauwaert & van Kessel, 2018). In order to examine these questions, a measurement is needed that is able to trace thin populism equally well across time and space. Depending on the type of measurement equivalence established (see below), this scale property allows to compare correlations of populist attitudes with other concepts or even the comparison of mean values and distributions of populist attitudes across nations. Moreover, if equivalence for the measure is found, the idea that thin populism is a construct that has universal status across countries (as it represents the common denominator of different types of populism) would receive

empirical support. This so called etic approach (Wirth & Kolb, 2012) is followed in the present study regarding both, the concept as well as the measure. Hence, with a measurement equivalence test, the core of thin populism is sought to be identified in different nations, despite the fact that prevailing political realities shape populism differently within these nations.

Measurement invariance is conventionally tested using multi group confirmatory factor analysis (MGCFA) which allows for the assessment of different types of invariance: configural, metric and scalar invariance (Davidov, 2009; Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1998). In that order, the invariance types get more demanding but, if established, offer more possibilities for conclusions. As summarized in Wettstein et al.: "If the same correlational structure among the items and latent variables may be imposed on the data of all countries, configural invariance is established and the scale is reliable in each individual country. More demanding is metric invariance, which requires that the loadings of like items and factors are invariant across all groups. Metric invariance is a necessary condition for cross-national comparisons on correlations with other constructs. If researchers aim at comparing absolute values, scalar invariance is required. This means that measurement intercepts must be identical across countries. With scalar invariance, differences in the observed item means are directly proportional to differences in the latent means" (p. 6; cf., Schemer, Kühne, & Matthes, 2014).

The IPA was translated into eight languages and then tested for the degree to which it exhibits the different types of measurement equivalence via an 11 country survey data set gathered online in 2015. The country sample includes two Eastern (Bulgaria and Poland), two Northern (Sweden and the U.K.), one Southern (Italy), and five Western European (Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland) countries, as well as the United States and in each country 1000 respondents (but 1017 in Germany) were queried.

The invariance test revealed the IPA to exhibit configural and metric invariance to full degrees. Scalar invariance was only established regarding a compromised model in which constraints had to be released across countries for three items in total and moreover, the model did not seem to fit the data in Sweden. The manuscript concludes therefrom that, "albeit no complete scalar invariance was found, there is partial scalar invariance" (p. 14). Taken together, while the structure and factor loadings are invariant and an interpretation of correlations of this scale with other concepts across countries is admissible, the comparison of mean scores across countries is not advised without reservations. In general, the proposed

hierarchical three-dimensional measure proved to measure populist attitudes validly across countries.

As *Article I* also this additional paper engaged in construct validity tests of the measure, this time across countries. These tests were quite successful in all samples. First, it was expected that this measure for *thin* populism would exhibit a curvilinear relationship to left-right-wing political orientation. In all countries the IPA related to the left- and right end of the political orientation scale what indicates that the IPA is suited to assess thin populism regardless of other political ideologies. Moreover, it was shown that the IPA consistently related positively to voting intentions for populist parties and negatively to voting intentions for non-populist parties. Only a few exceptions were reported and discussed in the limitations of the manuscript.

To sum up, the present thesis introduces a hierarchical, three-dimensional measure that was developed in an etic approach, that is, based on a common definition for populism. The measure fully captures the core dimensions of the thin populist ideology and therefore the degree to which the populist belief system's core is internalized. Moreover, the measure exhibits very satisfying degrees of construct validity, both internally (as was shown via CFA and MGCFA) as well as externally (as was shown via several correlational analysis).

2nd Generation Measurements – An Ongoing Debate

Starting in 2016 further populist attitudes inventories were published, including the IPA introduced above. This second generation of populist attitude scales follows the first generation in the assumption that populist attitudes consist of two or more essential components. At least 17 different scales to populist attitudes have been published after 2013 (see Table 2 for an overview). As most of these scales were published only in the last three years and as 2019 started out with the publication of yet another "new scale" (Castanho Silva, Andreadis et al., 2019, p. 150) it is quite apparent, that the search for a measurement to populist attitudes is ongoing. Although, most of these scales have a lot in common as they were built upon the ideational definition to thin populism, their sheer number whets the suspicion that the agreement on a single measure to populism is today maybe further away than it might have been ten years ago. In his state of the art report on populism research Rooduijn closes with a similar concern: That the current "sexiness of populism" (2018, p. 8) motivates many scholars to employ the term in their studies, even though they might be focusing on a different topic. Potentially, this increases rather than decreases the conceptual blurriness that has always surrounded populism.

Most of the scales developed after 2014 are still unidimensional and largely built on the six item index proposed by Akkerman et al. (2014), however, extend the index by the one or other item for yet different reasons (e.g., Stavrakakis et al., 2016; van Hauwaert & van Kessel, 2018). In addition to these scales, a few recent measurement approaches acknowledge that a measurement to populist attitudes should separate between the different facets that the concept is comprised of and hence, propose multidimensional model specifications (e.g., Castanho Silva, Andreadis et al., 2019; Schulz, Müller et al., 2018). Among the multidimensional measurements some do not only focus on thin populism but reach out for components that transform the concept into, for example, radical right-wing populist attitudes (Rooduijn, 2014b) or distinguish between anti-elitism and exclusionism (Hameleers & de Vreese, 2018).

Table 2. List of publications including public opinion measures to populist attitudes.

Authors, Year	Specification	Type populism
Hawkins & Riding, 2010	unidimensional	thin
Stanley, 2011	single items	thin
Hawkins et al., 2012	unidimensional	thin
Akkerman et al. 2013 (print, 2014)	unidimensional	thin
Rooduijn, 2014b	hierarchical, three-dimensional	thin & nativism
Elchardus & Spruyt, 2016	unidimensional	thin
Hobolt, Anduiza, Carkoglu, Lutz, & Sauger, 2016	three-dimensional	thin & out-groups
Spruyt et al., 2016	unidimensional	thin
Stavrakakis et al., 2016	unidimensional	thin
Oliver & Rahn, 2016	three-dimensional	thin & nationalism
Schulz, Müller et al. 2017 (print, 2018)	hierarchical, three-dimensional	thin
Vehrkamp & Wratil, 2017	unidimensional	thin
Spierings & Zaslove, 2017	unidimensional	thin
van Hauwaert & van Kessel, 2018	unidimensional	thin
Steiner & Landwehr, 2018	hierarchical, three-dimensional	thin
Hameleers & de Vreese, 2018	two-dimensional	anti-elitism & out-groups
Castanho Silva, Andreadis et al., 2019	hierarchical, three-dimensional	thin

Note. This list might not be complete.

To close this chapter, I would like to point to three specific aspects regarding which there is, on my account, still room for improvement in scale development and which should hence be considered by future research. The first and the second one touch upon the question of construct validity again. First, disagreement persists with regard to the core components of populism. Looking into the cited works, four components appear regularly but in different compositions: the Manichean outlook, anti-elitism, popular sovereignty and the homogeneity and virtuousness of the people. Based on Philip Converse's work, I introduced an approach that is able to integrate all four features. This approach understands the Manichean outlook as the superordinate posture of the populist belief system from which other components emanate. It further identifies anti-elitism, popular sovereignty and the homogeneity and virtuousness of the people as three idea-elements essential to populism and that hence, constitute the core of the populist belief system. The specification of the measurement as a hierarchical three-dimensional model introduced in *Article I* largely follows this structure. However, this specification only implies that the Manichean outlook is captured in the second-order latent variable of the model. As the IPA's homogeneity dimension does not carry items that reflect the Manichean outlook, skepticism is warranted regarding the scales fit to its theoretical specification. But, when comparing all measures, the one proposed in the present study is arguably one of the most complete captures of the populist ideology. In any case, scholars on populist attitudes should in a concerted exercise, 'balance the books' and find a compromise. As populism is under suspicion to severely threaten established democracies, social sciences are well-advised to offer the best possible, that is, the most adequate measure to gauge populism on the individual level.

Secondly, most of the measures developed (including the one introduced in the present study) tap for what could be coined liberal forms of populism but they fail to tap for the phenomenon's illiberal dimension (see Pappas, 2016 for a similar critic). Potential damaging aspects that populism can have for democracy, as for example, the suppression of minorities and the erosion of checks-and-balances are missing. Put briefly, the items tap for agreement to popular sovereignty but not for *unrestricted* popular sovereignty. A consequence of this can be detected when examining the means found across these measures in nationwide representative surveys that often appear to be comparably high, that is, above the scales' respective midpoints. Evidently, a great part of the surveyed populations can agree to the statements comprising these instruments (cf., Castanho Silva, Andreadis et al., 2019, p. 150). However, it would be false to conclude therefrom that a majority within these populations is populist and that this is imminently dangerous for democracy. As

populism can be both, a corrective and a threat to democracy (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012) scholars should keep a watchful eye on the spread of populism discovered with these measures but not be too quick in ringing the alarm bells. Attention is strongly demanded as the step from liberal to illiberal populism is certainly very small. In any case, a measurement that explicitly taps for the illiberal dimensions of populism could shed light on the question of the extent to which the distinct dangerous face of populism has pervaded societies. Future research on populist attitudes should make a concentrated effort also in this direction.

The third question is comparably new to the study of populist attitudes but essential to the application of the scale. It is of rather technical type and refers to the adequate aggregation methods applied to the construct (cf., Wuttke et al., unpublished draft). In accordance with several other approaches to populist attitudes, the present approach claims to identify individuals as populist, if they agree to all core components comprising the concept. All components are hence deemed *necessary* for the presence of populism. However, the cited studies, including the present one, compute individual populism scores as mean scores or factor scores what, admittedly, ignores this central premise. With this approach, low scores on one dimension compensate high scores on another. Future research needs to discuss, if this is a severe drawback or if the error that it causes is tolerable against the fact that all measures have exhibited decent predictive power regarding vote choice, issue positions or many other correlates. Moreover, alternative aggregation methods need to be tested against the one employed most commonly to see if they lead to different outcomes.

In the upcoming chapters I will employ the IPA to gauge populist attitudes in survey research and use it as a predictor for media perceptions, public opinion perceptions, and media use in multi-group regression analysis. The aim is to examine, if low trust in news institutions as well as congruent public opinion perceptions can be systematically linked to populist attitudes and if, moreover, individuals who support populism exhibit different media diets compared to citizens who disagree to the populist ideas. To start these examinations, I will outline a social identity approach to populist attitudes according to which strong populist attitudes indicate identification to the group of the people. This framework shall help to explain how and why different idea-elements important to the populist belief stem are constrained to one another. If systematic correlations are indeed established in the empirical investigations that are to be presented in each of the following two Chapters, respective attitudes, perceptions and behavioral inclinations were identified as additional components of the populist belief system.

Chapter 4 : Populist Citizens' Media & Public Opinion Perceptions

The next two Chapters follow a trajectory through the populist belief system that moves out of the systems core into a direction that is of particular interest to communication science. More specifically, in Chapter 4, populist attitudes are set in relation to media perceptions and public opinion perceptions, and Chapter 5 examines the relation between populist attitudes and news preferences. To this moment, no scientific investigation on these relations can be found in the literature. Merely anecdotal evidence and theoretical work give rise to the suspicion that citizens who support the populist ideas could be prone to systematically reject the mainstream news media as agents of the evil political elite. A scientific analysis of this link is, however, highly important as a rejection of the mass media in general by a particular segment of the population can amplify societal polarization in at least two different ways. According to theory on public opinion, the mass media are thought to inform the audience about the present tilt of public opinion. In doing so, they shall bring about societal integration (e.g., Noelle-Neumann, 1974). However, if individuals strongly distrust mainstream news institutions, they tend to a) reject the mediated climate of opinion and b) turn to alternative news providers (Tsfati, 2003). Both outcomes would mean that affected individuals live in different realities as compared to the remainder of the population. If citizens with populist attitudes perceived the media hostile against their own views, they as well could reject the mediated climate of opinion and settle in opinion congruent information environments. Thus, in addition to the relation between populist attitudes and media perceptions I will also examine the link between populist attitudes and public opinion perceptions (Chapter 4) as well as the link between populist attitudes and media use (Chapter 5). Thereby, media perceptions, public opinion perceptions and media use will be considered relevant idea-elements within the populist belief system. How these entities are perceived and used by individuals holding populist attitudes (RQ 1 & RQ 3) is thus an investigation of constraints prevailing between the system's core and these idea-elements.

These analyses will be of theoretical and empirical kind. I will first expand upon theoretical considerations to offer explanations for why and how the different idea-elements could stand in interdependence. Afterwards, multi-country survey studies will seek for evidence of these relations in different country contexts. The theoretical considerations mainly involve the outline of a *social identity approach to populist attitudes*, to which I will turn at first.

Once this framework is established, it will be applied to develop hypotheses regarding populist citizens' perceptions of public opinion and the media as well as regarding their news preferences. Within these more specific deductions, I will make use of theoretical approaches and concepts that are commonly employed in media psychology. More specifically, I will consider literature on the false consensus, the hostile media effect, the persuasive press inference, and selective exposure. I will then introduce empirical findings with regard to the proposed relationships that were presented first in *Article II* (Chapter 4), *Article III* and *Article IV* (Chapter 5). Moreover, the present chapter also presents an additional analysis that investigates media genre skepticism by populist citizens.

Social Identity Approach to Populist Attitudes

To introduce the social identity approach to populist attitudes, I will briefly reiterate what I have thus far said about the role of social identity in this thesis. In Chapter 1, I have pointed to the importance of group identities for belief systems. In Converse's findings, a remarkable share of individuals viewed and evaluated politics along the lines of social groupings (Converse, 2006). I have considered that this could have to do with the human nature that tends to think about the self and others in terms of in-group and out-group members. Further, I have pointed out that this may be particularly fertile for populist communication, which strongly focuses on the distribution of social identity frames. Hence, I have concluded that populist communication and social psychological theories as well as both in interplay should be considered when we want to understand the constraints constituting the populist belief system. These considerations were extended in Chapter 2, where I introduced the notion of populism as identity politics. I stated that populist identity frames offer social categories along which social categorization processes can unroll and added that insights coming out of the research on the social identity theory offer reasons to believe that the human nature is very conducive to communication based on such cues (cf. Hogg & Reid, 2006). Finally, I claimed in the end of Chapter 3, that populist attitudes can serve as an indicator of identification with the group of the people. I will use the present subchapter to explain this line of argument in more depth and in doing so, make it applicable for the investigations with regard to RQ 2 and RQ 3.

The Social Identity Perspective

To start with, I will summarize premises of the *social identity perspective*[9] (SIP; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987) that I consider important for the argument being made here. In this connection, I will strongly rely on an article published by Hogg and Reid (2006), who applied the social identity perspective to communication research.

The SIP suggests that the *self-concept* is comprised of a personal and a social identity. While individuals possess but one *personal identity*, their *social identity* is set together by numerous group memberships and is hence, multiple. A person can be a member of a particular family, school, band, social class, party, gender, race, and so forth. According to the theory, these group identities, if salient in a certain context, can guide thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and behavior concerning the self as well as others. The social cognitive process that "causes individuals to identify with groups, construe themselves and others in group terms, and manifest group behavior" (Hogg & Reid, 2006, p. 9) is named *social categorization*. The specific process in which the self itself identifies with a specific group is termed *self-categorization*.

The motivation underlying social categorization processes (including self-categorization) is a *self-enhancement motivation*. According to a main premise of SIP, it is particularly important for the human self-esteem that the different group memberships which constitute the individual's self-concept are positively valued. The need for *positive social identity* thus motivates the individual to "create, maintain or enhance the positively valued distinctiveness of in-groups compared to outgroups on relevant dimensions" (Turner, 2000, p. 8). The individual adapts different strategies to reach this goal. As the quote indicates, this process most often involves *social comparisons* that are set to result in the perception of in-group superiority over out-groups. As a vast amount of studies on the minimal group paradigm showed, social categorization, that is, the mere perception of belonging to a distinct group, can foster the search for positive attributes that the in-group shares (i.e., in-group favoritism) as compared to negative attributes that the out-group shares (i.e., out-group derogation) (e.g., Brewer, 1979; for an overview see Gramzow, 2007). These perceptions can serve to enhance perceived in-group entitativity, in-group cohesion and/or in-group homogeneity. All of these reactions can help the individual to feel as a part of a united social whole that is

[9] Following contemporary social psychological literature (e.g., Hogg & Reid, 2006, p. 8), I use the label *social identity perspective* to refer to what are in fact two separate but "allied and largely complementary" Turner (2000, p. 7) theories, that is, social identity theory and self-categorization theory.

superior to any other out-group on relevant dimensions (Kelly, 1989; Simon & Brown, 1987). Further, social categorization can underpin "context-relevant group and intergroup behaviors" (Hogg & Reid, 2006, p. 12; Kelly, 1989; Turner et al., 1987) in which individuals favor in- over out-group members.

These positive and negative attributes that define specific social categories are also termed *prototypes*. According to Hogg and Reid, these prototypes can be understood as *group norms* as they do not only describe but also prescribe how one has to "feel, perceive, think, and behave" (Hogg & Reid, 2006, 10f.) as an in-group member, as well as how in-group members ought to think about out-groups. In order to count as a group member the individual reconfigures the self and others as representations of these prototypes what is referred to as the process of *depersonalization* (Turner, 1982). Through this process, neither the self nor others are recognized as unique individuals but as group members who embody all kinds of group attributes. Hence, depersonalization involves an adjustment of own perceptions and own behavior to meet the expectations of the own group, while it encourages stereotype-consistent interpretations of out-group behavior (Hogg & Reid, 2006).

Importantly, from a social identity perspective, in-group confirmative thinking and behavior are a function of in-group identification and do not follow, for example, the wish to avoid social sanctions or disapproval. More specifically, to the social identity argument compliance with group norms is not just superficial obedience but it is particularly important for the self-concept and has in this sense, a self-definitional function (Abrams & Hogg, 1990). This is why such adaptions can be encouraged by high levels of in-group identification or different types of in-group threat such as, for example, minority status (Marks & Miller, 1987).

This points to a significant influence on human perceptions and behavior that group prototypes understood as group norms may have. Against this background, it is important to ask how these group norms are established. Following Hogg and Reid (2006), group prototypes are constructed, modified, and shared via direct and indirect communication. Group members infer their group's norms from this communication. Therefore, they need to pay attention to what other group members say and how they behave (direct) or what is said about the own group by external sources, such as the mass media (indirect). The moment in which these cues lead individuals to change their own thinking and behavior (as emphasized above, in the sense of actual internal cognitive change through persuasion) is termed *social influence* (cf. referent informational influence theory, e.g., Abrams & Hogg, 1990).

Importantly, not all group members exert the same influence as to the definition of group norms. Rather, in most groups only a few actors or even one person alone will be important in that sense. These persons are what Hogg and Reid refer to as "entrepreneurs of prototypically" (p. 15) or "entrepreneurs of identity" (p. 20) or put simply, as *group leaders*. Group leaders embody (or purport to embody) all group prototypes and hence function as a reference to all in-group members. In other words, they are the "best source of information about the group norm" (p. 20), what gives them great power to influence the self-understanding of the in-group and the specification of out-groups. Thereby, existing in-group prototypes are rhetorically accentuated while appropriate out-groups are demonized (Reicher & Hopkins, 1996). Indeed, effective leaders have the ability to "present their message in such a way that it enables social identity mobilization" (Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011; Mols, 2012, p. 331). In today's communication environment, group leaders have many possibilities to reach their followers. They can either meet them within personal encounters, on social media (direct), or, should they be perceived as important enough, their ideas can be distributed via the mass media (indirect). It must not be said, that this comes with a high potential of their ideas being amplified, regardless of whether they represent majorities or minorities (Moscovici, Mugny, & van Avermaet, 1985). With these words, I am now turning back to the investigation of the populist belief system. Below, I will summarize the social identity perspective presented above in a direct application to populism.

Applying the Social Identity Perspective to Populism

The social identity approach to populist attitudes starts with one main premise: The approach understands individuals who support the core dimensions of populism as in-group members of the people, or more briefly, as populist citizens. If this is the basic premise, we should be able to describe and explain all perceptions and behavior exhibited by these citizens via the different mechanisms involved in social categorization and social influence. Or, in Converse's terminology, these social psychological mechanisms should be applicable to explain constraints between different idea-elements within the populist belief system (Converse, 2006). This is how the present study seeks to explain populist citizens' public opinion perceptions as well as their media related attitudes, perceptions, and behavior.

Social categories established by populism. In applying the social identity perspective to populism I will start with what I have referred to last in the SIP subchapter, that is, an examination of the prototypical group-member from which social influence can be expected most. I argue that in populism this role is played by the populist leader, who can be a leader

of a populist movement or the head of a populist party. Populist leaders are not any leaders but they are often "charismatic leaders" (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008, p. 5) and maybe most importantly, they all claim to embody the people's will (Barr, 2009, p. 40). More specifically, populist leaders often originate (or claim to originate) from within the people. This lends them a lot of credibility when they assert to be as ordinary as the people or to incarnate the people's culture (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008). The populist leader is also described as "one with the people whose deepest feelings he (or she) articulates" (Kriesi, 2013, p. 7). To the social identity perspective, the populist leader is thus the perfect representative of a group prototype and a clear reference for other in-group member's perceptions and behavior. Once other in-group members accept the leader's status, it should be possible for this leader to manipulate or add new in-group attributes and to demonize out-groups, or, in Converse's terms, to define what constitutes the populist belief system.

First and foremost, the populist leader uses populist communication as defined in Chapter 2, to build the virtuous in-group of the people and to demonize the political elite as an out-group. With this, populism construes two social categories which, if salient, potentially trigger social categorization. However, as also others have recognized, populist communication does not stop at this point (Reinemann, Aalberg, Esser, Strömbäck, & de Vreese, 2017). In-group attributes can diversify or the out-group can be extended by ever more evil dimensions and actors who are then reproached to be jointly hatching a plot against the people. For example, out-groups commonly added in right-wing populism are immigrants and/or religious groups. The in-group is most often shaped by adding further attributes such as intelligence or poverty but it can as well be expanded by adding further groups. For example, in 2018 members of the German populist party Alternative for Germany (AfD) founded a Jewish association within the own party (Juden in der AfD) what was likely done to support the claim that the AfD is not anti-Semitic (Prange, 2018). With this, the Jews were as a group, willingly or not, included as part of the people for whom the AfD and its party leaders claim to stand up for.

In the same way, I will argue, populist actors reproach mainstream news organizations to be the enemies of the people and claim, that populist citizens represent a silent majority, whose shared views and interests are not heard by the malevolent political elite. I will turn back to these two features further below and discuss in how far these cues can partially cause populist individuals to adapt hostile media perceptions and congruent public opinion perceptions. Next, I will discuss what the self-categorization as a member of the people,

that is an identification as a populist citizen, could entail according to the social identity perspective.

Social psychological reactions. As stated, the social identity approach to populist attitudes understands those who support the populist ideas as having identified with the in-group of the people. If this social identity is salient, persons should depersonalize and accordingly, adjust their perceptions and behavior to meet the expectations of the in-group. Further social comparisons should be unleased that are set to perceive the group of the people as superior to the political elite. Both, the human self-enhancement motivation as well as cues within populist communication should jointly reinforce these processes. In other words, populist communication provides a direction in that it offers solutions on how in-group members can gain most from social comparisons. However, as this was shown in the minimal group experiments, part of the respective reactions would also result without particular cues but rather, as genuine social psychological consequences (cf., Gramzow, 2007). But if cues are present, the need for positive identity should gratefully follow these cues what paves the way for respective adaptions of attitudes, perceptions and behavior into the direction desired by those who count in this process as identity entrepreneurs.

Many consequences are conceivable for populist citizens: For example, positive in-group attributes should be pronounced within individual perceptions. To populist citizens this could entail that they think about themselves and other members of their group as being virtuous, innocent, pure, and inherently good. Further, perceived in-group homogeneity should increase. That the group of the people is homogeneous is to a large extent directly promoted within populist communication but, according to the social identity perspective, perceived similarity is also a genuine cognitive output of self-categorization (Turner et al., 1987). As was shown, the perception of in-group homogeneity is particularly functional for minorities as it promotes "perceived strength of the in-group and allow[s] group members to define themselves as an integral part of a social whole" (Kelly, 1989, p. 242). To add another possible outcome, we could also expect populist citizens to self-enhance via out-group discrimination. More specifically, social psychological research has shown that in case of salient social identities, out-group members are downgraded on dimensions important to a specific social comparison what leads the in-group (and its members) to thrive. In populism such mechanisms are again triggered by identity cues. For example, according to a common populist claim, the political elite is to blame for the unfortunate situation of the people. This perception absolves the in-group from guilt which is instead put on the elite (cf., Hameleers et al., 2017a). This can involve increased out-group homogeneity per-

ceptions following which members of the out-group are perceived to be more similar than they actually are, that is, all guilty to the same degree. The out-group is sweepingly rejected with no exceptions.

These examples were thought to illustrate how the social identity perspective can be applied to populism. That is, how it can serve to explain individual level reactions following populist identity cues. Before I will apply this approach to the investigation of populist citizens perceptions of the media and public opinion, I will briefly share some thoughts on measuring in-group identification to the people.

Measuring in-group identification to the people. With regard to the IPA introduced in Chapter 3, it might appear counterintuitive that populism is measured metrically, that is, as a dimension, but that in this chapter I seek to understand populist attitudes as identification in binary terms, that is, of those who identify with the ideology (i.e., populist citizens) and those who do not (i.e., non-populist citizens). However, also with regard to other ideologies this is rather common. While ideological identification with a group is, of course, categorical, it is at the same time dimensional in that the degree of psychological attachment can vary continuously (cf., Kinder & Kalmoe, 2017, p. 48). I argue that particularly high levels of populist attitudes can represent a specific group consciousness and hence, be read as in-group identification (cf., Elchardus & Spruyt, 2016). Admittedly, this might not be equally true for those who strongly disagree to the populist ideas as this 'group' is likely very heterogeneous. However, in line with social identity theory, in-groups can also establish as a simple reaction to out-groups and norms spread by these out-groups. This is particularly likely in the absence of clear in-group normative information. In-groups than evolve in the spirit of counterconformity, that is, as "polarized away from the out-group" (Hogg & Reid, 2006, p. 13). Thus, with some reservations, but for the sake of simplicity, I am treating particular strong support to the populist ideas as an indication for identification as a populist citizen and particular strong disagreement to these same ideas as an indication for identification as a non-populist citizen. Because it is difficult to set a threshold that defines were in-group identification starts or ends, a metric measure still appears most appropriate. I will therefore use the IPA as a metric index in all analysis in this thesis. In this regard, the developed measure is not dichotomous but it is still able to categorize. The fact that also established measures of in-group identification are metric measures further supports this approach (Leach et al., 2008).

In the following I am going to apply the social identity approach to populist attitudes to an investigation of populist citizens media and public opinion perceptions. It seems reasonable to start with considerations regarding populist citizens' public opinion perception as this concerns the self-understanding of the in-group. Afterwards I will deduce a hypothesis with regard to populist citizens' media perceptions, what concerns the specification of out-groups.

Populist Attitudes and Public Opinion Perceptions

Following the social identity approach to populist attitudes introduced above, populist communication and the human social psychology can be functional to the establishment of a populist belief system on the individual level. This concerns specifications and perceptions as to the self-understanding of the in-group as well as specifications and perceptions of the out-group or out-groups. Regarding these extensions, the presumed persuasive mechanism is always the same: Identity cues are offered and embraced and reinforced by high-identifying individuals' social psychology. I argue, that we should also be able to deduce a hypothesis regarding populist citizens' public opinion perceptions drawing back on these mechanism. I will start the deduction focusing on relevant identity cues first, before discussing specific social psychological mechanisms that could pave the way for these cues to be persuasive.

Populist majority cues. Contemporary research on the social identity perspective has shown that political leaders can exert social influence with regard to the audience's collective self-understanding (Haslam et al., 2011; Mols, 2012; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). This is particularly important to the populist ideology that is primarily about advocating the in-group of the people. According to the populist ideology, the people are crafted as a homogeneous and virtuous group, a coherent entity of good and honest character who form a unity in sharing the same interests and values (Mudde, 2004; Wirth et al., 2016).

Following the social identity perspective, populist leaders could be expected to extent these core features of the people by further attributes which they believe to be potentially helpful in mobilizing their followers. The distribution of *populist majority cues* that, if effective, leads in-group members to believe that their own opinion represents what the societal majority believes could be one such useful add-on. Indeed, the literature on populism discusses that the people in populism are often displayed as "the silent majority" (Taggart, 2000, p. 92). It can further be discussed that already the mere reference to "the people" implies, that a majority is being addressed and represented. However, especially in right-wing populism,

were the narrative also points to 'waves of immigrants' that threaten to exterminate the national people and, de facto, reduce them in their number, the term people cannot not be taken as a synonym for majority. Rather, it appears more adequate to separate majority cues as an additional feature to populist communication. As there is thus far no content analysis on the frequency of opinion majority claims voiced by populist actors as compared to other political actors, only anecdotal evidence can serve to illustrate such rhetoric. For example, Donald Trump could be heard saying the following in a campaign speech in Phoenix, Arizona held in July, 2015: "The silent majority is back, and we're going to take the country back" (Right Side Broadcasting Network, 2015). Likewise, Jair Bolsonaro addressed his followers in Brazil as the majority in a campaign speech in September, 2018: "Let's make a country for majority! The minority must bow to the majority. Law must exist to defend the majority! The minority suits itself [to the law] or just disappears" (Magalhaes, 2018). Statements like these set a norm that is particularly relevant for the in-group's self-understanding. The in-group is defined as a group that is 'de facto' a majority but whose voices are not heard but suppressed by the ruling political elite. As outlined above, cues like these can foster in-group bias through the process of social categorization. I will look more closely into these processes in the subsequent paragraphs.

The social psychological reaction. Those who identify as populist citizens should be likely to follow populist majority cues as illustrated above. As these cues are promoted as shared by all group members, that is, as group prototypes or norms, individuals wo self-categorize as group members should internalize these cues through the process of depersonalization. To reiterate, depersonalization leads the individual to view the self as a member of the group and not as unique. The more important the group is to the individual's self-concept, the stronger should such adaptions become as they are important to the definition of the self. In other words, if the group is important to the self and if majority status is set as a group prototype individuals should be likely to change their perceptions following the cue. It can be expected that populist citizens believe their own opinion to have majority status and that this perception strengthens the more somebody identifies as a group member.

This hypothesis is also plausible for further reasons as social categorization can also cause in-group bias without specific cues being necessary. Indeed, to believe that a more general other, as for example represented by public opinion, agrees to the own worldview is a quite common perceptual distortion that has been investigated under labels such as "false consensus" (Ross, Greene, & House, 1977), "projection" (Holmes, 1968), or "looking glass effect" (Fields & Schuman, 1976). While the projection of the own opinion onto the opin-

ion of others seems to be a very general human tendency, research has established circumstances under which this biased perception occurs even more pronounced. Central to the argument of the present study is the insight, that perceived in-group threat or minority status can motivate individuals to engage in consensus perceptions (Mullen, 1983; Mullen & Hu, 1988; e.g., Sanders & Mullen, 1983; Simon et al., 1990; Wetzel & Walton, 1985). In general, majority beliefs, perceived similarity to others or false consensus perceptions can increase self-esteem and help in developing a favorable self-view (Hoorens, 1993). More specifically, consensus perceptions can "bolster perceived social support, validate the correctness or appropriateness of a position, maintain self-esteem, maintain or restore cognitive balance, or reduce tension associated with anticipated social interaction" (Marks & Miller, 1987, p. 73).

Many of these reasons could play a role for populist citizens' public opinion perceptions as well. While populism construes the group of the people as a numerical majority, the populist narrative states as well that the people are constantly suppressed by the political elite. Thus, with regard to power yet not number the people within populism form a group that has minority status and that is thus, a group that is under threat. This is further supported by analysis that show that citizens with populist attitudes perceive themselves to be relatively deprived as compared to others (Spruyt et al., 2016). Accordingly, majority perceptions could be functional for those high on populist attitudes without respective cues being necessary. For example, the populist opinion or populist actors are often publicly criticized and delegitimized for being immoral, reactionary, politically incorrect, or extreme within the daily mainstream news reporting (Herkman, 2015; Koopmans & Muis, 2009; Wettstein, Esser, Schulz et al., 2018). Under these circumstances, public opinion majority perceptions could help populist citizens to validate the appropriateness of their otherwise attacked positions. This social psychological mechanism should be reinforced by populist majority cues. Against this background, *Article II* posits the following first hypothesis:

A2-H1: A person's populist attitudes become stronger, he or she becomes more likely to perceive public opinion as congruent with his or her own standpoint.

Populist Attitudes and Media Perceptions

Next, I will discuss populist citizens' perceptions of the media against the background of the social identity approach to populist attitudes. This includes considerations as to social identity cues spread by populist leaders as well as to social psychological mechanisms that are assumed to interact with these cues.

Populist anti-media cues. Group leaders do not only shape the self-understanding of the in-group but they also specify the out-group or out-groups. In political populism, the relevant out-group is notably the political elite. However, for reasons to be discussed in this sub-chapter, populist politicians also vent their anger against established news institutions. According to the main populist reproach, 'the media' lie and conspire with the political elite against the people and are considered "an instrument of the established parties" (Mudde, 2007, p. 67). This cue enlarges the malicious out-group by yet another actor what immediately increases its threatening nature. Not only is one specific actor working against the people, but rather, numerous evil actors cooperate. Furthermore, the out-group is construed as being very homogeneous. More specifically, politicians and media are evil to the same extent and share the same goal, that is, to deprive the people and there are no exceptions to this rule. Moreover, and similarly important to the psychological reactions which I will display below, both groups are attributed high power. While politicians have power over decisions (and the people have not), the 'lie media' are setting the agenda, frame events, and potentially, influence or manipulate other's opinions.

Only a few supply side studies have thus far investigated what has been termed *anti-media populism* by Benjamin Krämer (2018). These studies revealed, that the Belgian populist party Vlaams Blok most frequently employed attacks against the mainstream media as compared to other parties (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007), and that representatives of Swedish alternative media believe that mainstream news institutions have joint forces with the political elite (Holt, 2016). These scientific observations can further be exemplified by anecdotal evidence. A very prominent example, Donald Trump, was cited in the introduction of this thesis. But lie media accusations or system media reproaches can be found elsewhere as well. For example, in 2015 two prominent AfD politicians, Björn Höcke and Alexander Gauland, held a speech about "democratic principles" in parallel in two different German cities. One of these democratic principles can be translated from the German speech script as follows: "The by many so-called liars press has often earned its name. Instead of objective reporting, a fatal welcome culture is propagated. The GEZ-funded state-owned television labels us as enemies, because we say what shall not be said" (Kubitschek, 2015).[10] This

[10] German original: „Die von vielen so genannte ‚Lügenpresse' hat sich ihren Namen nicht selten redlich verdient. An Stelle objektiver Berichterstattung propagiert sie eine fatale Willkommenskultur. Das GEZ-gebührenfinanzierte Staatsfernsehen markiert uns als Gegner, weil wir sagen, was nicht gesagt werden soll."

example illustrates quite well how populism as identity politics can sound. In applying an 'us' versus 'them' rhetoric, the media are pitted against the people and in defining the media as state-owned the institution is directly tied to the ruling political elite. Following Hogg and Reid, these kind of cues can function as group norms which, in this case, "characterize the behavior of members of relevant out-groups" (2006, p. 10). Individuals who self-categorize as populist citizens should be prone to follow these cues and accordingly, categorize 'the media' as an out-group that is potentially harmful to the own group (cf., Fiske & Ruscher, 1993).

The social psychological reaction. Indeed, from the social identity perspective the populist anti-media cue could be particularly functional for both, in-group favoritism and out-group derogation. First, social psychological studies have shown that the perception of the own group as being controlled by homogeneous, powerful out-groups has an in-group cohesion effect what includes both, increased in-group identification and increased in-group favoritism (Bettencourt, Charlton, Dorr, & Hume, 2001; Dépret & Fiske, 1999). In other words, the populist anti-media cue can be very functional to the search for positive distinctiveness of the in-group and hence, to the in-group members' self-esteem. Second, next to the repercussion that the populist anti-media cue can have on the perception of the in-group, it can as well be expected to foster out-group derogation and discrimination. Most importantly, the cue indicates a strong out-group homogeneity what should contribute to perceive the out-group as more homogenous as compared to the in-group. This cue is likely very effective as it supports what is in effect a very general human tendency. According to the out-group homogeneity effect, individuals usually tend to perceive greater similarity between out-group members as comparted to in-group members (Linville & Jones, 1980). A reason for this is the greater familiar that individuals experience with regard to other in-group members what leads them to perceive their own group to be rather heterogeneous. Importantly, out-group homogeneity perceptions are very influential. This condition facilitates the depersonalization of out-group members what can in turn, dehumanize these individuals, increase their threatening nature, and foster discrimination against them (Brewer, 1979; Simon & Mummendey, 1990; Wilder, 1978, 1984). Studies showed, that out-group homogeneity perceptions encourage the stigmatization of out-group members in stereotypical terms (Simon, 1992) and "facilitate[s] aggressive responses toward them" (Wilder, 1986, p. 316).

A study in the bipartisan US context provided evidence for the out-group homogeneity effect with respect to the perception of bias of specific partisan media outlets. Liberal

Democratic partisans perceived a greater variability in media bias among liberal news sources (e.g., MSNBC or CNN) as compared to a more homogeneous bias of conservative media outlets (e.g., Fox News) and the opposite pattern was found for Conservative partisans (Stroud, Muddiman, & Lee, 2014). The very general populist anti-media cue could trigger comparable perceptions by individuals who identify with the populist ideology. However, rather than that the cue refers to specific outlets, it lumps together all mainstream news providers with no room for exceptions and hence, provokes out-group homogeneity perceptions of much larger scale. Arguably, in-group members of the people who internalize this message can be expected to sweepingly rejected all established news institutions. Mainstream media should be perceived as building one stereotypical evil mass against which in-group members of the people have to oppose and against which, eventually, one has to respond aggressively. That populist followers increasingly attack journalists, verbally as well as physically, can be taken as first anecdotal evidence for such reactions.[11]

Against this background it would be reasonable to assume that citizens with populist attitudes turn away from mainstream news institutions and seek elsewhere for information about politics. I will turn to this question in Chapter 5. But even if these news were still approached, a categorization of 'the media' as an out-group can be very consequential with regard to how content spread by these outlets is perceived. Specifically, research on the hostile media effect shows that independent of the bias of the reported content, the mere fact that a news was produced or distributed by an out-group source results in perceiving the content as hostile toward own views (Reid, 2012). These hostile perceptions can further be enhanced by factors such as high in-group identification (Arpan & Raney, 2003), illegitimate, low in-group status (Hartmann & Tanis, 2013), and high reach suggesting that potentially many others can be influenced by the hostile message (Gunther & Storey, 2003). All these conditions could play a role for the populist citizen. In-group members of the people should perceive a low, illegitimate status as compared to the out-group. Moreover, as the out-group is none other than the *mass* media, the anticipated reach of hostile messag-

[11] Indeed, journalism faces severe threats, not only in countries that have consistently scored low in press freedom rankings but also in countries in which the freedom of speech, expression and information as well as the independence of media is actually protected by constitutional law and in which media freedom is thus officially acknowledged as one of these democracies' foundational pillars. However, according to the latest report by Reporters Without Borders (2017) an erosion of media freedom was in 2017 especially visible in European countries and the United States.

es should be high. In taking all these considerations together, *Article II* posits the following second hypothesis:

A2-H2: As a person's populist attitudes strengthen, he or she becomes more likely to perceive the mainstream media's reporting as incongruent with his or her own standpoint.

Populist Attitudes and the Persuasive Press Inference

The argumentation in this chapter thus far assumes that populist attitudes relate to a) congruent public opinion perceptions, and to b) hostile media perceptions. This suggests that c) populist citizens' media and public opinion perceptions drift apart with increasing populist attitudes. In other words, the stronger populist attitudes become, the more hostile will the media be perceived and the higher the perceived congruency between own and perceived public opinion. Hostile media perceptions are hence expected to correlate positively with congruent public opinion perceptions for those in support of populism. Interestingly, this argumentation is in fact inconsistent with insights provided by research on the persuasive press inference. In contrast to what this dissertation assumes to be true for populist citizens, this research shows that people infer public opinion perceptions from what they perceive within media coverage (Gunther, 1998; Gunther & Christen, 2002; Gunther, Christen, Liebhart, & Chia, 2001). According to this line of research public opinion should be perceived as incongruent to the own views if the media are perceived as hostile. These assumptions thus amount to a negative relationship between these concepts.

To illustrate the consequences of the perceptual distortion predicted for populist citizens I draw back on an influential theory of public opinion formation to which the persuasive press inference mechanism is central: The spiral of silence theory introduced by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann in 1974 assumes strong media effects on public opinion as individuals presumably understand the media tone as a reference to that opinion (about the recognition of the theory see Donsbach, Salmon, & Tsfati, 2014). Hence, when the argumentation herein determines that populist attitudes relate to hostile media perceptions *and* to congruent perceptions of public opinion, it neglects the media's influence in the process of public opinion formation. Put differently, the presented line of argument claims that to populist citizens, the media lose their function as a reference for public opinion and hence, potentially fail to integrate society as a whole. As outlined in earlier Chapters of this thesis, this could cause societies to polarize along populist attitudes. As strong polarization is a threatening scenario for democratic societies, this study sets out to examine the role of the persuasive press inference mechanism for populist citizens' public opinion perceptions.

The social identity approach to populist attitudes as well as insights by the research on presumed media effects on others can offer an explanation for why the persuasive press inference could indeed be turned off for populist citizens. Populist citizens perceive the people as their very homogeneous and positively charged in-group and strive to reach high similarity to other in-group members. Moreover, the people in populism are characterized as a very intelligent and emancipated group that is able to make own decisions following common sense (Mudde, 2004; Taggart, 2000). Under these conditions, research on presumed media effects would predict that an individual who identifies with this group perceives members of this group to be less susceptible to media influences (Duck, Hogg, & Terry, 1995; Reid & Hogg, 2005; Sun, Pan, & Shen, 2008). More specifically, individuals who regard the people as their in-group should be motivated to believe in weak media effects on this group as a function of perceived similarities and because of the group's intelligence, which should protect the group from simply believing the disinformation spread by the manipulative enemy. Research on the third person effect seconds this argument. It was found that individuals estimate larger media effects for out-groups as for the own group (Hoffner & Rehkoff, 2011). For these reasons, the persuasive press inference mechanism is likely weaker for populist citizens as prior studies on the mechanism suggest. This could lead the gap between hostile media and congruent public opinion perceptions to widen rather than to shrink. *Article II* therefore posited the following third hypothesis:

A2-H3: As a person's populist attitudes strengthen, the difference between perceptions of congruent public opinion and of a hostile media increases.

In addition to this hypothesis that assumes a gap to open between hostile media and congruent public opinion perceptions along increasing populist attitudes, *Article II* also undertook a direct test of the persuasive press inference mechanism which was not explicitly hypothesized. I will use the space in this synopsis to put greater emphasize on this test when I summarize the results below.

Before I will turn to a summary of the hypothesis tests and results that were published in *Article II*, I would like to close the theoretical considerations in turning back to the research question to which I am seeking a response within the present Chapter. RQ 2 asked, how populist attitudes relate to media and public opinion perceptions in different countries. Above, I have used a social identity approach to populist attitudes to explain possible relationships between the concepts important to this research question. Yet, another objective tied to this question demands an examination of the degree to which the suggested rela-

tions can be found within different countries. The revelation of such patterns traveling across country borders would be particularly interesting to the investigation of populism as a political belief system. In fact, finding such patterns across countries would lend empirical validity to the idea that respective relations are not random but part of an attitudinal syndrome. The confirmation of the assumed relationships in different countries would especially point to the social psychological approach chosen within this thesis. Robust results across countries could imply that a) communicative cues as to the specification of in- and out-group are similar in different countries and that b) the human social psychology reacts comparable to these cues described above. Hence, *Article II* presents a multi-country study on the relationships between populist attitudes, media perceptions and public opinion perceptions.

Results Article II

Article II tested for the three hypotheses in making use of a cross-sectional data set gathered in the metropolitan areas of Berlin and Brandenburg, Germany (N=640), Paris and Île-de-France, France (N=640), Zurich and canton of Zurich, Switzerland (N=1,250), and London and Buckinghamshire, United Kingdom (N=824). The original article is filed in Appendix A and can be consulted for detailed information about sample, measures, and results.

The analysis set out with a factor analysis, which provided evidence that the different concepts important to the study are empirically distinct. After this was established, multi-group regression analyses were run in order to test for the hypotheses. The effect of populist attitudes on the different outcome variables was controlled against several further variables: sex, age, education, political interest, political orientation, and political extremity. Moreover, the models controlled for the fact that cases were nested within countries by fixing all slopes to the country variable. Only intercepts were randomly estimated what meets the research question aiming to investigate patterns between different variables but not the extent to which populism has pervaded societies.

The results support all three hypotheses. The stronger populist attitudes are, the more hostile are the media being perceived and the higher is the perceived congruence between own and public opinion. Moreover, the study also revealed that the difference between incongruent media perceptions and congruent public opinion perceptions increases with increasing populist attitudes. In all models populist attitudes turned out to be the strongest predictor. The findings are robust also across the country samples what speaks for the notion of

populism as a political belief system. The different concepts relate to each other as was predicted no matter in what political context they are surveyed and they do so to similar strong degrees.

In an additional analysis, *Article II* presents a path model that was specified to investigate the extent to which populist citizens infer public opinion from perceived media tone. The data used to estimate the model was cross-sectional and hence, causal interpretations have to be made with caution. However, the model specification followed prior studies in which the presumed directionality of the projection effect, the hostile media effect, and/or the persuasive press inference was demonstrated within experimental research (e.g., Gunther et al., 2001). Again, regression slopes were constrained while intercepts were allowed to vary across countries. Table 3 displays the estimated coefficients. The model replicates the findings with regard to A2-H1 and A2-H2 as populist attitudes are again strongly related to hostile media perceptions and congruent public opinion perceptions. Importantly, the path from media perceptions onto public opinion perceptions is far from being significant.

Table 3. Country-fixed effects for populist attitudes and media perceptions predicting public opinion perceptions.

	β	*b*	*SE*	*p*
Fixed effects				
Congruent Media Perceptions				
Populist Attitudes	-.35	-0.64	.03	.000
Congruent Public Opinion Perceptions				
Populist Attitudes	.42	0.73	.03	.000
Congruent Media Perceptions	-.01	-0.02	.02	.447
Random Intercepts				
Congruent Media Perceptions				
Berlin		3.37	.03	
Paris		3.51	.03	
Zürich		3.07	.02	
London		3.43	.03	
Congruent Public Opinion Perceptions				
Berlin		3.12	.06	
Paris		3.14	.07	
Zurich		2.95	.06	
London		3.10	.06	

Note. N=3354. The model was estimated as a path model in R using the package lavaan (Rosseel, 2012). The model fit indicators for this path model show an acceptable fit: χ^2=32.93, *df*=9, RMSEA=.056, SRMR=.032, CFI=.97.

This finding indicates that if hostile media and public opinion perceptions can be attributed to populist attitudes, the persuasive press inference mechanism is indeed annulled. That says, the media are no longer accepted as a reference regarding the tilt of public opinion to those who support populist ideas. This can be troublesome to democracies. If a specific segment within the population no longer believes in the realities reported by the media and hence rejects the mediated climate of opinion, societies are in danger to polarize (cf., Tsfati, 2003). Although the projection of the own opinion onto public opinion was in all previous studies on the topic shown to be remarkably strong (as this was the case in the present study), these studies also revealed that "perceptions of public opinion are also swayed by perceptions of media content" (Gunther et al., 2001, p. 314). In that sense the media have always been found to work as a corrective against projection effects. Also if to only little degrees, their reporting seems to remind individuals that public opinion is also influenced by opinions diverging from their own. To populist citizens, however, this corrective does no longer seem to play a role.

Polarization can further be driven, if individuals who support populism turned away from mainstream news to settle in opinion congruent information environments. Therefore, an investigation of populist citizens news consumption is of high interest to this study. I will turn to such examinations in Chapter 5. Before, I will undertake an additional analysis that follows a limitation of the investigation presented in *Article II*.

Populist Attitudes and Genre-Specific Media Skepticism

Article II comes with several limitation which are discussed in detail within the article itself. They shall not be repeated here. However, I have identified one particular limitation that can be overcome with an additional analysis. This analysis will not only be useful for the present chapter, but it can also inform the media consumption studies which I am about to present in the upcoming chapter. More specifically, *Article II* did not differentiate between different types of media when asking for individual media perceptions. Rather, media perceptions were measured in a very general manner as the study asked for the participants' opinion regarding *the media* or *the media reporting*. This approach is reasonable with regard to the present research endeavor. The study aimed at investigating the populist perception of the media and argued that this perception is inspired by populist identity cues according to which the media are being attacked as one entity without much differentiation. Moreover, it was assumed that social psychological mechanisms tied to social categorization could reinforce the homogeneity perceptions of this out-group. The survey conducted hence

tapped for perceptions of *the media* in this general way as well. However, there are reasons to assume, that differences in perceptions could occur, if the survey differentiated between specific news genres. On the one hand, tabloid newspapers and private TV news often portray themselves as mouthpiece and advocates of the people (Wettstein, Esser, Schulz et al., 2018) and with that engage in what has been termed media populism (Krämer, 2014). It is possible that this suits the populist perception and leads to less skepticism regarding this media genre. On the other hand, public service media and quality newspapers are often directly associated with the political establishment (Mazzoleni et al., 2003). For example, public TV is funded "by the state" as was claimed by Gauland and Höcke in the speech cited above. It is therefore reasonable to assume that populist citizens have these genres in mind when they respond to an item that asks for their evaluation of *the media*. In order to investigate these ad-hoc hypotheses I am conducting the following additional analyses:

I will use a 2017 survey data set ('2017 data') in which measures for both, the IPA as well as genre specific media skepticism can be found. Conveniently, this very data set was also used in *Article III*, which will be presented in Chapter 5. Details about the survey can thus be found in the respective paper, filed in Appendix A. For the present matter, I will limit the method report as to the measures not introduced anywhere else, as yet. Importantly, the data set has been gathered in the exact same countries which were investigated in *Article II*. However, the sampling was conducted on the national level and was not restricted to metropolitan areas. On the one hand, this compromises the comparability with the results provided by *Article II*. On the other hand, however, the results that will be presented in the following are based on data that is more representative to the national populations in the investigated countries.

As a first analysis, I replicated the media perception model as the 2017 data set contained the very same measure for media perceptions as the 2015 data set used in *Article II*. Interestingly, the results of a random-intercept-only-model reported in Table 4 almost completely match the results reported in *Article II*. The b-value for populist attitudes is -.62 (p<.001) and was -.63 (p<.001) in the 2015 data. Of course, this is partly due to mere coincidence but the similarity of the results is nonetheless remarkable. The only difference in terms of significances occurred with regard to political extremity. *Article II* suggested, that extreme political attitudes should foster hostile media perceptions. Surprisingly, there was no effect found for political extremity in *Article II*. However, it is significant in the replication data and tends in the expected direction. This first analysis lends confidence with regard to the 2017 data set.

Table 4. Replication of the media perception model of Article II with the 2017 data.

	Congruent Media Perceptions		
	b	*SE*	*t*
Fixed effects			
Intercept	-0.24	0.25	-0.97
Age	0.00	0.00	0.93
Sex (male)	0.00	0.05	-0.06
Education (high)	-0.03	0.06	-0.59
Political Interest	**-0.05**	0.02	-2.92
Political Orientation (r.)	**-0.06**	0.01	-5.39
Political Extremity	**-0.12**	0.02	-5.90
Populist Attitudes	**-0.62**	0.04	-15.57
Random intercepts			
Berlin	0.97		
Paris	1.07		
Zürich	1.36		
London	1.56		
R^2 *adj.*	.18		
N	2165		
AIC fixed effects	6368.32		
AIC random effects	6978.04		

Note. The depended variable is coded as in *Article II*. High values indicate non-hostile perceptions, low values indicate hostile media perceptions.

I therefore turn to the more specific investigation of media genre skepticism. The 2017 survey asked for skepticism with regard to several media genres (i.e., tabloid newspapers, quality newspapers, public TV news, private TV news, Facebook, Twitter). The measure has been developed for that survey only. The introductory question to the measure read as follows in the UK questionnaire*: "If we now no longer talk about the media in general, but divide them into groups again, could you then tell us whether (and if yes, how much) you are sceptical of the listed media when the distribution of political information is concerned?"*. A series of single items taped for skepticism toward the different media genres. The items and a basic descriptive report can be found in Table 5. For each item answers could be given on a 7-point Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 – *I'm not at all skeptical of it* to 7 – *I'm very skeptical of it*. Participants could also indicate, that they do not know the one or other media genre (8 – *I don't know it*).

I have used each item presented in Table 5 as an outcome variable in a series of random-intercept-only-models. The predictors were kept equal to the analysis presented in *Article II*. The results, reported in Table 6, are very telling. While populist attitudes are strongly related to perceiving the media in general as very hostile, interesting differences occur as to which specific news genre is suspect to populist citizens. More specifically, the results show that populist citizens indicate skepticism with regard to quality newspapers (b=.38; p<.001) as well as public TV news shows (b=.39; p<.001) but not with regard to other news genres and neither with regard to Facebook and Twitter. This confirms half of the ad hoc hypotheses delineated above. It was also considered that populist citizens could be less skeptical regarding the tabloid press as well as private TV news as these genres often act as advo-

cates of the people what should match populist citizens' worldview. Such relations were not revealed, whatsoever. Rather, the respective effects did not turn significant what indicates that populist as well as non-populist citizens are equally skeptical (or equally unskeptical) with regard to these news types.

Table 5. Dependent variables used in the test of genre specific media skepticism.

Item	N	*M*	*SD*
Commuter and/or tabloid newspapers (e.g., The Sun, Daily Mail,...)	2022	5.08	1.72
High-quality and/or subscription newspapers (e.g., The Guardian, The Telegraph,...)	2006	3.85	1.61
News shows on privately owned television channels (e.g., ITV1,...)	2087	4.41	1.65
News shows on public television channels (e.g., BBC News,...)	2116	3.81	1.72
Facebook	1889	5.22	1.76
Twitter	1550	5.16	1.88

I have also tested for the populist perceptions of Facebook and Twitter as Chapter 5 will look into the extent to which populist citizens use these platforms to get politically informed. I will come back to the respective findings presented in Table 6 when I turn to the corresponding analysis in the next Chapter.

Taken together, this additional analysis showed that it does indeed make sense, to look for differences in populist citizens media perceptions between genres. Despite the populist reproach to the media being a very general reproach, populist citizens are particularly critical with regard to high quality traditional news. It are these news genres which populist citizens have in mind, when they reproach 'the media' to lie and to conspire with the political elite against the people.

Summary

In the present Chapter I have investigated populist citizens media and public opinion perceptions using multi-country survey data. The results were quite robust and provided for the first time in the research on populism *systematic* evidence for a strong relationship between populist attitudes and hostile media perceptions as well as between populist attitudes and opinion majority beliefs in four Western European democracies. In addition, no link was found between media perceptions and public opinion perceptions. This last observation stands in contrast to findings provided by studies (e.g., Gunther & Christen, 2002) on the persuasive press inference. These studies have demonstrated an inference mechanism following which individuals infer public opinion from perceived media tone perceptions.

This mechanism was not found to work for populist citizens what indicates that the mainstream media might no longer work as a corrective regarding the public opinion perceptions of populist citizens. On the contrary, populist citizens' public opinion perceptions seem to be essentially driven by projection. An explanation to these perceptual patterns was provided by a social identity approach to populist attitudes that has as well been introduced in the present chapter. Although this approach was not put to an empirical test, it provided a number of social psychological ideas helpful to understand the perceptual phenomena, including their underlying dynamics.

The observed relationships are cause for concern and deserve a comprehensive discussion. This discussion will be held in Chapter 6 against the background of all other findings presented within this dissertation. However, some of the findings presented above can inform the investigations of populist citizens' media preferences that will be subject of the next chapter. Individuals who distrust the mainstream news do not only tend to reject the mediated climate of opinion but they also show distinct media news choices (Fletcher & Park, 2017; Tsfati & Cappella, 2003). The hostile media perceptions exhibited by citizens with populist attitudes give rise to the supposition that this group turns away from the mainstream and toward alternative news sources to get politically informed. The additional analysis conducted above provided insight into what media genres in particular populist citizens are skeptical about to wit, public TV news as well as quality newspapers. Against this background it is reasonable to assume, that populist citizens essentially avoid these hard news outlets. Chapter 5 is devoted to an investigation of this question and I will pick up the insights revealed in Chapter 4 when deducing respective hypotheses.

Table 6. Fixed and random effects for populist attitudes on media genre skepticism.

	Tabloid Press			Quality Press			Private TV news			Public TV news			Facebook			Twitter		
	b	*SE*	*t*	*b*	*SE*	*t*	*b*	*SE*	*t*	*b*	*SE*	*t*	*b*	*SE*	*t*	*b*	*SE*	*t*
Fixed effects																		
Intercept	**4.60**	0.40	11.56	**2.84**	0.34	8.40	**3.91**	0.29	13.54	**2.00**	0.37	5.42	**4.78**	0.33	14.56	**4.48**	0.39	11.37
Age	0.00	0.00	0.69	0.00	0.00	0.26	0.00	0.00	-1.31	0.00	0.00	-1.24	**0.01**	0.00	2.07	**0.01**	0.00	2.26
Sex (male)	-0.08	0.07	-1.10	**-0.24**	0.07	-3.46	-0.11	0.07	-1.45	-0.05	0.07	-0.63	-0.10	0.08	-1.24	-0.07	0.10	-0.77
Education (high)	**0.20**	0.08	2.41	-0.10	0.08	-1.23	**0.20**	0.08	2.42	0.12	0.08	1.50	0.06	0.09	0.63	0.13	0.11	1.20
Political Interest	**0.16**	0.03	6.24	**-0.05**	0.02	-2.18	**0.07**	0.02	2.92	0.00	0.03	-0.08	**0.15**	0.03	5.36	**0.13**	0.03	3.96
Political Orientation (r.)	**-0.04**	0.02	-2.59	**0.03**	0.02	2.02	-0.01	0.02	-0.50	**0.09**	0.02	5.65	0.00	0.02	0.05	0.00	0.02	0.05
Political Extremity	**0.08**	0.03	2.90	0.05	0.03	1.71	**0.08**	0.03	2.88	0.05	0.03	1.71	0.02	0.03	0.65	0.04	0.04	1.13
Populist Attitudes	-0.06	0.06	-1.15	**0.38**	0.05	7.16	0.08	0.06	1.51	**0.39**	0.05	7.18	-0.11	0.06	-1.83	-0.07	0.07	-0.99
Random intercepts																		
Berlin	4.53			2.55			3.91			1.65			4.82			4.61		
Paris	5.20			2.58			3.91			1.57			4.90			4.68		
Zürich	3.90			2.85			3.91			2.31			4.59			4.17		
London	4.76			3.37			3.91			2.48			4.79			4.45		
R^2 *adj.*	.13			.10			.02			.12			.04			.04		
N	2002			2006			2087			2116			1889			1889		
AIC fixed effects	7747.14			7485.16			8034.29			8132.16			7482.27			6364.96		
AIC random effects	7746.84			7493.33			8033.11			8129.45			7480.31			6368.32		

Note. Effects significant at $p<.05$ are in boldface. AIC fixed is the AIC for models in which only intercepts were randomly estimated. AIC random is the AIC for models in which intercepts as well as slopes for populist attitudes were randomly estimated. The random intercepts reported for the Private TV news model are different from each other but only after the tenth decimal place.

Chapter 5: Populist Citizens' News Preferences

The investigation of individual media use and media diets has become particularly relevant in today's digital times. These times are characterized by high-choice media environments in which individuals can theoretically seek out the content that suits their needs and own interests best. It is a commonly held fear that such news selection leads to the radicalization of individual views and to polarized news audiences on the aggregate level (K. Jamieson & Cappella, 2010; Stroud, 2011; Sunstein, 2002). This chapter presents considerations and several empirical investigations of news audience polarization along populist attitudes. Should populist attitudes be found to consistently relate to the use of specific news genres, evidence for a polarization along this political attitude would be established. Moreover, a behavioral component of the populist belief system would be identified.

The chapter refers to *Article III* and *Article IV* of this cumulative dissertation that investigated populist attitudes as a predictor for the use of different kinds of news providers. However, the articles did not put much emphasize on the social identity approach to populist attitudes that is applied in this synopsis. Rather, the respective theoretical considerations focus on insights coming right out of the research on selective exposure. The theoretical outline presented in the following will therefore deviate to some extent from what was discussed in the articles themselves. More specifically, I will link the social identity approach to populist attitudes to the selective exposure approach in order to deduce hypotheses with regard to populist citizens news selection patterns. Moreover, some of the hypotheses tested within the articles (especially *Article IV*) are of no relevance to the present research question. I will therefore limit the summary to information that can offer a response to that question: How are populist attitudes related to news choice in different countries? The investigation of relationships between populist attitudes and news media preferences shall offer insights regarding media related behavioral inclinations as part of the populist belief system.

The conventional selective exposure approach suggests that individuals selectively approach information that is in line with own views and selectively avoid content that challenges the own opinion (Festinger, 1957). Although the selective exposure literature meanwhile strongly criticizes this classical distinction of selective approach and selective avoidance (e.g., Garrett, 2009b; Garrett & Stroud, 2014; Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2011; McGuire, 1968), it still offers a useful structure through the fast amount of literature on the topic. I

will therefore divide this chapter following these two facets of selective exposure and speak about selective approach to opinion congruent content by populist citizens first, followed by considerations regarding populist citizens behavior vis-a-vis opinion in-congruent content. Before, however, I will speak in all brevity about the applicability of the social identity perspective to selective exposure research.

Selective Exposure as a Product of Social Identity

The "theory of selective exposure" (Stroud, 2017, p. 1) has been of great importance to communication science ever since the concept appeared first in Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet's influential study on "the people's choice" (1948). According to its traditional claim (cf., Festinger, 1957) individuals purposefully select messages that are in line with their beliefs and convictions. A series of psychological explanations for why individuals seem to gravitate toward like-minded information have been put forward in the literature. The role of social identity for selective exposure, however, has not often been looked at in previous research. A couple of studies have investigated social identity as a driver for exposure to non-political media content (Harwood, 1999; Knobloch-Westerwick & Alter, 2007; Knobloch-Westerwick & Hastall, 2010; Mastro, 2003). Only recently, also exposure to information about politics has been examined as a product of social identity by two studies (Long, Eveland, & Slater, 2018; Wojcieszak & Garrett, 2018). These two studies accord with each other in the observation that the social identity perspective can be particularly meaningful for selective exposure research in times in which "intergroup animosities have reached troubling levels" (Wojcieszak & Garrett, 2018, p. 247) and in which "communication technologies […] could lead to an increasingly fragmented and adversarial society" (Long et al., 2018, p. 2). However, as also pointed out by Long et al. (2018), many previous selective exposure studies have investigated partisanship as a driver to news choice. According to psychometric studies and research on partisanship, common measures of partisanship arguably tap into in-group identification as well (Huddy, Mason, & Aaroe, 2015; Iyengar, Sood, & Lelkes, 2012). Hence, it is not unreasonable to read studies on partisan selective exposure in the light of the social identity perspective also if respective concepts and explanations have not been explicitly consulted (e.g., Garrett & Stroud, 2014; Iyengar & Hahn, 2009).

Indeed, there is little question to the general assumption put forward by all these studies: Politically motivated selective exposure is a product of either attitudes, partisanship or in-group identification. What is less clear and still discussed are the conditions under which

selectivity occurs (Garrett, 2013). With respect to this question, the social identity perspective can be particularly informative to selective exposure research as it offers comprehensive explanations for exposure decisions and introduces new moderators and mediators that have not yet been taken into consideration by selective exposure studies that approached the phenomenon from other theoretical angles. For example, Long et al. (2018) argue that selective exposure to partisan media is driven by external threats to the own identity. Wojcieszak and Garrett (2018) reason that because identity salience motivates social comparisons (cf., Tajfel & Turner, 1979) identity salience should also trigger exposure to information that can help the individual to positively distinguish the in-group from out-groups. Group status, the permeability of group boundaries, perceived in- and out-group homogeneity, or, notably, specific cues set by group leaders represent other factors that could play a role. Most intriguing, a social identity approach to selective exposure can help to refine hypotheses about approach and avoidance tendencies as it takes group specificities into account. In a group conflict, assumptions about a particular group's information preferences can differ from the assumptions regarding the information preferences of the opposing group depending on each group's specific characteristics and not only depending on the strength of identification.

In the following, I will develop hypotheses regarding populist citizens' news preferences. In line with the argument presented above, I argue that the news diet of populist citizens should differ from the news diet of non-populist citizens as the group of the populist people is different in many respects as compared to the group of those not supporting the populist ideology. Mainly, I will argue that populist citizens are likely to prefer specific news genres over others for the same social psychological reasons that let them trust and distrust these genres. Essentially, news media that are defined as supportive to the in-group should be approached and news media that are labeled as the out-group should be avoided.

Approach to In-Group Sources

I will start with considerations as to the exposure to content that promises to be in line with the own worldview, that is, content that is kindly disposed to the in-group. Research on selective exposure has established the approach to opinion congruent content as a very stable and remarkable strong human tendency. Different psychological notions are considered in the literature to explain for this phenomenon (for a review see Stroud, 2017). In his early account, Festinger (1957) argued that the desire to avoid cognitive discomfort can explain both, a general preference for attitude-consistent information and an aversion of

counterattitudinal content. Another approach explains the turn toward like-minded content arguing that congenial information is easier to process and therefore attractive for cognitive misers what also explains the avoidance of opinion challenging content (Ziemke, 1980). It has also been argued that like-minded information is perceived as more credible as compared to attitude-inconsistent content and therefore preferred (Fischer, Schulz-Hardt, & Frey, 2008).

The social identity approach chosen in this thesis proposes the following rationale: Populist citizens should be inclined to approach news genres that promise sympathy with regard to their in-group. From what media outlets or genres such sympathy can be expected is according to the applied social identity approach not so much a question of own experience but rather defined by cues diffused by group leaders. As discussed by research on selective exposure these cues can indeed be considered as guiding news selection: "[P]olitical elites can exacerbate selective exposure. Their cues direct citizens about which media outlets to use and which to avoid" (Stroud, 2017, p. 12). In the populist case, the elite cue on media bias is mainly given by the populist leader who, in doing so, continues to construe the populist belief system.

In Chapter 4 I have argued that the populist reproach against the media is of very general kind. All established media are rejected with no room for exception. Hence, a first analysis set out to investigate populist attitudes in relation to perceptions of 'the media' without differentiating between specific outlets or even genres to find that populist citizens exhibit strong hostile media perceptions. Against this background, it could be expected that support to populism leads to a general avoidance of mainstream news as they might all be recognized as enemies or out-group to the in-group of the people. However, an additional analysis presented in Chapter 4 examined media genre skepticism and indicated that populist citizens mainly have public service TV news as well as the quality press segment in mind, when they judge *the media* as reporting hostile against the own view. In contrast to that, no pronounced skepticism was exhibit with regard to tabloid newspapers as well as private TV news, neither on the low nor on the high end of the populist attitude continuum. This result was found, although also these outlets arguably count as mainstream or established news providers.

These findings regarding the differences in populist citizens' media genre perceptions demand a discussion of what could be different for tabloid newspapers and private TV news as these differences potentially influence how populist citizens approach these genres. It

could be assumed, that the populist anti-media cue is not as broad and general as was suggested first in this thesis. This would mean, that populist politicians speak positively about tabloid newspapers and private TV news, while only their cues regarding the quality press and public TV news are negative. Unfortunately, a systematic analysis on populist politicians' attitudes toward specific media genres is missing. Assumptions can only be informed by anecdotal evidence. For example, the German AfD has a difficult relationship to the tabloid *Bild Zeitung* as this newspaper has always been critical of the right-wing populist PEGIDA[12] movement as well as of right-wing political actors in general (Kemper, 2016; Mudde, 2007, p. 249). This has led AfD party members so speak critically about the outlet. For example, the party's former leader Frauke Petry stated in a TV interview in 2017 that not all articles published by the tabloid support the AfD and that much of its reporting is undifferentiated. In that same interview Petry evaluated the reporting of the magazine *Der Spiegel* as depending on the journalist writing for the magazine (Lamby, 2017). With that, the politician presents a rather ambivalent position toward this news brand. If anything, such cues should lead populist followers to distrust and hence, turn away from the tabloid newspaper *Bild Zeitung* as it is identified as an out-group member by populist leaders.

The literature on media bias perceptions suggests that cues as to what media people can trust and not trust and hence, likely use or avoid, can also be diffused by the media themselves (Watts et al., 1999). Accordingly, anti-media cues do not have to stem from populist politicians but can also be provided by journalists. In this respect, communication science has discussed and investigated a phenomenon termed *media populism*. Media populism is defined as "the use of the abovementioned stylistic and ideological elements by some media, viz. the construction and favoritism of in-groups, hostility toward, and circumvention of the elites and institutions of representative democracy, reliance on charisma and (group-related) commonsense, and appeal to moral sentiments (thus on an emotionalizing, personalizing, and ostentatiously plainspoken discourse)" (Krämer, 2014, p. 48). The notion of media populism suggests that also news outlets can be entrepreneurs of the populist identity. Most interesting for the context of the present study, recent empirical studies have found that especially tabloid newspapers portray the people positively and the political elite negatively (Hameleers, Bos, & de Vreese, 2017c; Wettstein, Esser, Schulz et al., 2018). However, no study has thus far identified, if tabloid news outlets are also particularly critical with regard to other media outlets.

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[12] Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes

Nonetheless, in positioning themselves as the mouthpiece of the people, tabloid news outlets should in the eyes of populist citizens qualify as close to the in-group, or even, as members of the in-group. This could explain the low skepticism exhibited toward these media by high identifying individuals. This could also indicate, that populist citizens selectively approach this media genre to stronger degrees as compared to their non-populist counterparts because it promises like-minded content. No content analysis has thus far examined levels of media populism for TV news outlets. However, on many other dimensions the reporting by tabloid media was found to be similar to the reporting of private TV news (Reinemann, Stanyer, & Scherr, 2016). Against this background, it is reasonable to assume that populist citizens also show a preference for news aired on public TV channels. The social identity approach applied here therefore posits the following two hypotheses, which were tested in the studies presented by *Article III*:

A3-H1a: Populist attitudes are positively associated with tabloid newspaper use.

A3-H1b: Populist attitudes are positively associated with commercial TV news use.

Much more explicit in comparison to tabloid news, specific news providers that can primarily be found online appear to team up with populist politicians, parties, and movements. Among those that shall be focused on within the present thesis are anti-elitist alternative media as well as the social network site Facebook.

The literature on alternative media is comparably rich (Atton, 2006). However, a common definition for the concept is still missing as it is treated differently almost by publication (Haller & Holt, 2018). Much of the research on the topic has focused on alternative news outlets that are potentially functional for democracies, for example, in supporting protests and resistance movements against undemocratic regimes (e.g., Leung & Lee, 2014). Other studies focus on alternative media that might be rather dysfunctional to liberal democracies, for example, in promoting right-wing and exclusionist ideologies (Hellmueller & Revers, 2017). The latter perspective on alternative media is relevant in the context of the present thesis. I focus on one specific feature shared by many brands that are often labeled as partisan alternative media, that is, a systematic opposition to the political and media establishment (cf., Bailey, Cammaert, & Carpentier, 2007; Newman, et al., 2018). For example, in the self-understandings that these outlets present many declare the development of a counter-public to the mainstream political discourse presented within the established news media as part of their central mission (cf., Bachl, 2018; Schweiger, 2017). In the moment in which such outlets position themselves as anti-establishment they share a significant part of

the populist worldview. Potentially, these outlets can become assistants to populist leaders in that they help them to spread their views further. What is more, these outlets might help to construe the in-group and demonize the out-group on their very own accounts. It is reasonable to assume, that alternative media with such affinity for populism can function as a reference to populist citizens when it comes to the specification of in-group and inter-group attitudes and behavior.

For two reasons, populist citizens should be likely to approach these news providers from a social identity perspective. First, in sharing a populist worldview, these outlets provide sympathy to the in-group and promise a consonant information environment to in-group members of the people. Second, should these outlets be recognized as group prototypes, in-group members should have high interest in turning toward them to learn about in-group adequate thinking and behavior. This could be particularly important for the evaluation of complex political affairs. In any case, to citizen supporters of populism these two features could qualify these alternative news outlets as close to the populist in-group what should in turn, make the selective approach toward these outlets more likely.

A4-H1: Populist attitudes will predict frequent exposure to anti-elitist alternative media.

As a specific platform, Facebook has been a focus of investigations focusing on news providers sympathetic toward the populist ideas (Esser, Stępińska, & Hopmann, 2017). Indeed, the platform has been identified as a host to a plethora of populist partisan pages. For example, merely for the German case Bachl (2018) has identified 7911 Facebook pages, which could be led back to the core AfD Facebook page via snowball network sampling. Also content analytical work has shown, that populist content is particularly prevalent on Facebook (Ernst et al., 2017). While likely not the whole platform will be recognized as an in-group entity, populist citizens can be expected to prefer access to political information via this platform as it hosts many reference groups that are positively disposed toward the populist worldview. Moreover, these pages present many references to traditional and alternative media that can function as cues as to which media are trustworthy and which are not (Haller & Holt, 2018). As also the additional analysis provided in Chapter 4 indicated that populist citizens are tangentially less skeptical toward Facebook as a provider for political information, I assume in this thesis that populist citizens should be inclined to approach Facebook to get informed about daily political affairs.

A3-H3a: Populist attitudes are positively associated with using Facebook for political information.

Avoidance of Out-Group Sources

According to the social identity approach applied in this thesis elite cues on media bias inform the populist citizen about which media to use and which media to avoid. While the populist position with regard to tabloid media and private TV is rather ambivalent as outlined above, populist parties and their representatives are outspokenly critical and hostile when it comes to public service media and quality newspapers. Especially public service media are often displayed as partners of the political elite and hence explicitly identified as part of the out-group. With regard to public TV news this can mainly be explained by the fact that these brands are publicly funded. Though different systems persist, most often it is federal law that forces citizens to support public broadcasting in various countries. According to a common populist reproach, this directly ties respective news outlets to the political establishment and causes them to report positively about the ruling elite. In their party manifesto the German AfD has hence explicitly positioned itself as critical of the public TV news services (Alternative für Deutschland, 2016). This position was carried much further in Switzerland, where the Swiss People's Party (SVP) launched an initiative to stop public funding of the public service broadcasting in 2017 (Scherrer, 2018). Also theory suggests that – according to the populist narrative – public TV news and quality newspapers are associated much more with the political elite as are tabloid media: "[T]hey tend to adopt a law-and-order attitude and to use their journalistic weapons for the defense of the *status quo* when it comes under attack from anti-establishment forces, such as protest groups and populist movements" (Mazzoleni, 2008, p. 51).

The additional analysis provided in Chapter 4 indicated that populist citizens are very skeptical when it comes to public service news as well as to established quality newspapers. Here I argue that this perception is likely informed by such identity cues spread by populist leaders. I further assume, that this leads populist citizens to turn away from respective sources as they should be considered as an out-group from which individuals need to keep away. *Article III* provides the tests of two avoidance hypotheses. One posits an avoidance of quality newspapers and another one posits an avoidance of public TV news in the case of strong populist attitudes.

A3-H2a: Populist attitudes are negatively associated with quality newspaper use.

A3-H2b: Populist attitudes are negatively associated with public TV news use.

To close the theoretical considerations I would like to return to the research question that shall be tackled within the present chapter. In light of the current public and scholarly de-

bate on news audience and societal polarization, it was suggested that specific news preferences by populist citizens could foster such polarization along the populist attitude continuum. Against this background it was thus asked how populist attitudes are related to news choice in different countries? (RQ 3) I reached out to the social identity perspective as well as to insights provided by the literature on selective exposure to derive specific hypotheses regarding the news genre preferences of populist citizens. However, as this was the case for all other research questions, also this question demands comparative analyses. Distinct populist media diets discovered across countries would argue in favor of the social psychological reasoning applied in this theses.

Article III tested for the hypotheses A3-H1a (tabloid use), A3-H1b (private TV news use), A3-H2a (quality newspaper use), A3-H2b (public TV news use), A3-H3a (Facebook use). *Article IV* tested for the hypothesis A4-H1 (alternative media use).

Results Article III

In order to explore the hypotheses two multi-national cross-sectional survey studies were conducted. As the measurements for the conceptual variables important to the hypotheses were almost identical in both studies, the one survey functioned as a conceptual replication of the other. The first survey was conducted online in 11 countries in spring 2015: Austria, Bulgaria, France, Germany, United Kingdom, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland (German and the French speaking part), and the United States. In each country approximately 1000 cases were collected (N=10570). Two years later, the survey was repeated in 4 countries that had also been part of the first survey. Approximately 500 cases were gathered in each, France, Germany, Switzerland and United Kingdom (N=2197). Also this survey was conducted online and in spring 2017. *Article III*, filed in Appendix A, discloses detailed information about the samples, the measures, and the results and further, it tests hypotheses that were not recapitulated above. In the following I will summarize the results provided by *Article III* regarding the hypotheses derived within this synopsis.

The media use measurement was very extensive in both surveys. A list-frequency technique was employed what offered different possibilities to operationalize news genre use. Two different approaches were followed in the analyses. First, a frequency score was computed that contained information regarding the mean frequency of contact an individual had with each genre during a week. Second, a sum score was computed that reflected information regarding how many outlets of the same genre an individual had claimed to use during a week. With two data sets, four traditional news genres (tabloid press, private TV, quality

press and public TV), and two different operationalizations, 16 models were specified to test for A3-H1a, A3-H1b, A3-H2a and A3-H2b. In contrast to that, I had to rely on one model only to test for populist citizens exposure to Facebook as Facebook use was only tapped for in the second survey, yet not in the first. All models were multi-group regression models with varying intercepts and fixed slopes and they were all controlled for the same variables: sex, age, education, need for cognition, political interest, political orientation, and media skepticism. In both surveys, populist attitudes were measured using the IPA. Depending on the level of the depended variable, the type of regression was different. The mean frequency scores demanded linear regressions, the sum scores called for zero-inflated poison regressions and as Facebook use for political information was measured dichotomously, a logistic regression was performed as well. As the number of analyses is so high and as the documentation of the results is partially hidden in the online appendix of *Article III*, I chose to summarize the results in Table 7 and Table 8 for this synopsis.

Hypotheses A3-H1a and A3-H1b posited an approach tendency toward tabloid newspapers and private TV news for increasing populist attitudes. These hypotheses receive support regarding both genres, across both data sets, and both operationalizations for the dependent variable. With increasing populist attitudes, the mean frequency of exposure to tabloid newspapers and private TV news increases and so does the sum of approached outlets belonging to these two categories. This analysis was replenished by an additional analysis in which the slopes for populist attitudes were freed from the country-constraint. Regarding private TV news use, the results of this analysis parallel the findings provided by the estimation of the random-intercept-only-models. Moreover, in all cases the BIC (Bayesian Information Criterion) value was smaller for the random-intercept-only-models as compared to the random-intercept-random-slope-model. This indicates that the approach tendency toward private TV news found for increasing populist attitudes is robust across countries. However, regarding tabloid newspapers differences occurred that qualify the results reported first. In the 2015 survey data set the BIC value for the random-intercept-random-slope-model was smaller as compared to the BIC value of the random-intercept-only-model. This indicates that the relationship between populist attitudes and the frequency of tabloid newspaper use varies across countries. A look at the country specific slopes for the random-effects-model revealed the expected positive effects in Austria, Bulgaria, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland. However, contrary to what was hypothesized, tabloid newspapers were used less frequently during the week the higher someone's populist attitudes were in Italy (b=-.38), the US (b=-.33), Poland (b=-.30),

France (*b*=-.21), and Germany (*b*=-.13). The significant positive relationship between populist attitudes and the mean frequency of weekly tabloid news use that was found via the estimation of fixed-effects is hence, not robust across countries.

Table 7. Summarized results of 8 multi-group regression models on the sum of approached outlets per genre.

	sum of selected outlets per news media type			
	tabloid press	private TV	quality press	public TV
sex (male)	no	no	no	no
age	no	no	no	more
education (high)	no	less	more	no
need for cognition	no	no	no	no
political interest	more	more	more	more
pol. orientation (r.)	no	more	no	no
media perceptions	no	no	no	less
populist attitudes	more	more	less	no
test for A3-…	H1a	H1b	H2a	H2b

Note. Results stem from two survey data sets (2015 and 2017). A 'no' indicates that across both data sets either no significance occurred or only one survey provided a significant result; 'more' indicates that a positive significant effect was found in both data sets; 'less' indicates that a negative significant effect was found in both data sets.

Table 8. Summarized results of 8 multi-group regression models on the mean frequency of contact with different news genres.

	mean frequency of selected outlets per news media type			
	tabloid press	private TV	quality press	public TV
sex (male)	no	no	no	no
age	no	more	more	more
education (high)	no	less	no	no
need for cognition	no	no	more	no
political interest	more	more	more	more
pol. orientation (r.)	more	more	no	no
media perceptions	no	no	no	less
populist attitudes	more	more	no	no
test for A3-…	H1a	H1b	H2a	H2b

Note. 'no' indicates that across both data sets either no significance occurred or only one survey provided a significant result; 'more' indicates that a positive significant effect was found in both data sets; 'less' indicates that a negative significant effect was found in both data sets.

The assumptions regarding an avoidance of public service news and quality newspapers by populist citizens (A3-H2a, A3-H2b) were not supported by the analyses. As reported in Tables 7 and 8, a negative relationship between populist attitudes and one of these news genres was only found for the sum of selected quality newspapers. This finding was consistent in both data sets, however, it was not paralleled by the second operationalization, that is, the mean frequency of quality newspaper use.

At last, a multi-group logistic regression tested for the posited positive relation between populist attitudes and the use of Facebook (A3-H3a). The results supported the assumption. The likelihood to using the social network platform Facebook as a means for political information increases with increasing populist attitudes. This result was also robust across countries as an estimation of random effects for populist attitudes revealed.

Results Article IV

The assumption that populist citizens' are more inclined to use alternative media compared to those not supporting populism (A4-H1) was tested within *Article IV*. The article had the objective to examine predictors to occasional and frequent alternative news use. Populist attitudes were among the predictors that were assumed to relate to frequent rather than occasional alternative news exposure. The hypothesis was investigated using a single country survey study conducted online in Germany in the run-up to the federal election in September, 2017 (N=1346). The original article disclosed detailed information about the sample, measures, results, and further analyses (Appendix A).

The following procedure was followed to compute the dependent variable. Twelve alternative news outlets were included in the survey that proved to be relatively well-known among participants of a pilot study run in April 2017: *Epoch Times, RT Deutsch, Junge Freiheit, Sputnik, Tichys Einblick, Politically Incorrect, Compact, Infowars, Sezession, KenFM, Kopp Report,* and *Breitbart*. Depending on how often individuals' indicated to use these brands, they were assigned a score of 0 (non-users), 1 (occasional users), or 2 (frequent users) on the dependent variable. A multinomial logistic regression analysis was used for the categorical dependent variable using the group of non-users as the reference category. The model was controlled for several psychological, media use and demographic variables: AfD vote probability, political extremism, political orientation, political interest, relative deprivation, the use of tabloid newspapers, quality newspapers, private TV news, public TV news, Facebook use, Twitter use, age, sex and education.

Results support the hypothesis. The likelihood to be a frequent alternative media user compared to a non-user of alternative news outlets increases with increasing populist attitudes (b=.24, p<.05). In addition also the probability to vote for the German populist party AfD positively related to being a frequent user of AMP (b=.57, p<.001). No significant effect for populist attitudes was found with regard to the contrast of non-users versus occasional users. This finding indicates comparably strong approach tendencies by populist citizens with regard to partisan media in Germany.

Summary

Chapter 5 presented theoretical considerations and findings regarding the news preferences of citizens with populist attitudes. Applying the social identity approach to populist attitudes, it was assumed that populist individuals prefer tabloid newspapers and private TV news as well as Facebook and anti-elitist alternative news media to get politically informed. Moreover, it was argued that populist citizens could tend to avoid public TV news and quality newspapers as those are categorized as out-group members to the people within populist identity framing. The presented analyses based on multi- and single-country survey data partially confirmed the assumptions. As was expected, populist citizens show approach tendencies toward tabloid newspapers, private TV news as well as Facebook and alternative news media when searching for information about politics. However, the analyses did not provide evidence for a systematic avoidance tendency regarding quality newspapers and public TV news although these news genres are often reproached by populist leaders as the enemy of the people, system media, or liars press and despite this dissertation found populist attitudes to relate to high levels of scepticism regarding these news genres. This paradox as well as all other findings presented in this dissertation deserve an extensive discussion that will be presented in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6: Main Findings, Discussion & Contributions

This dissertation provided various theoretical and empirical investigations that aimed to respond to the question of how the populist ideology as well as its specific relationship to the news media are reflected on the citizen level. This main question was divided up into three more specific research questions. The first research question (RQ1) asked for a measurement for populist attitudes that can be applied to comparative survey research. The second research question (RQ 2) asked for micro level relationships between populist attitudes, media perceptions and public opinion perceptions in different countries. The third research question (RQ 3) asked for relationships between populist attitudes and news preferences in different countries. This chapter has three objectives. First, I summarize the main findings provided by this dissertation and evaluate, in how far the results help to respond to the research questions. Second, the summary of findings will be enriched by an extensive discussion of their societal implications what will include possible directions for future research. And third, I will record all theoretical and empirical contributions provided by this dissertation.

Summary and Discussion of Main Findings

The thesis started out with an introduction to populism as a thin political ideology (Chapter 2). Following an extensive literature review and a discussion of previous approaches to measure populist attitudes a hierarchical, three-dimensional measurement to populist attitudes was introduced (Chapter 3). The measurement strictly follows the theoretical considerations regarding the dimensionality as well as the hierarchy of the components that constitute the ideology. More specifically, the measurement understands populist attitudes as a latent second-order factor with three distinct subdimensions to wit, anti-elitism attitudes, a demand for popular sovereignty, and a perceptions of the people as being homogenous and virtuous. In addition, the inventory captures whether individuals share populism's Manichean outlook that was identified as the superordinate posture within the populist belief system. The different features of populism are measured via 12 items altogether. In multiple analyses the inventory was tested using single- and multi-country survey data, applying exploratory as well as confirmatory factor analysis and thereby passed several construct validity checks. First, the model fit proved to be very good and superior to one-dimensional measures applied in earlier studies (internal construct validity). Second, the measurement exhibited configural, metric, and partial scalar invariance as was shown using a multi-group confirmatory factor analysis across 11 western democratic countries (cross-

national construct validity). Third, in all 11 countries under investigation the measure positively related to the probability of voting for left-, center, or right-wing populist parties whereas the IPA related negatively to the probability of voting for different mainstream parties. Moreover, the analyses established a curvilinear relationship between the IPA and left-right-wing-political orientation. That the measure did relate to either left- or right-wing political orientation or voting for either left- or right-wing populist parties indicates that it is indeed a measure tapping for thin populism. In addition, the measurement has been implemented in all subsequent analyses of this thesis as well as in additional studies not part of this theses (P. Müller et al., 2017; Wirz, 2018a, 2018b; Wirz et al., 2018). In these studies, the measure proved to relate to several further concepts according to the respective theoretical expectations. These analyses lend further credibility to the IPA (external construct validity). To this date, there is no other populist attitude scale that has fared similarly well in these or comparable psychometric tests and applications. Against this background, the IPA itself is the answer to RQ 1 as it is a valid measurement for populist attitudes that can be applied to comparative survey research.

After its introduction the IPA was related to media related variables with the aim to explore the populist belief system going beyond its core. Chapter 4 revealed, that populist attitudes are strongly associated with **ONE** hostile media perceptions and **TWO** congruent public opinion perceptions in a four country survey data sets. These relationships now found to be systematic had thus far only been suggested by anecdotal evidence and within theoretical work. Moreover, the analyses found that **THREE** the persuasive press inference mechanism according to which individuals infer public opinion from what they observe in the media is inactive for populist citizens. These relational patterns represent the answer to RQ 2 as they were also established in different country context. In addition to these findings, Chapter 5 revealed that populist citizens also have a very particular news diet. Populist attitudes were found to be associated with **FOUR** a preference for tabloid newspapers, private TV news, Facebook and alternative online media as sources for political information. However, populist attitudes were **FIVE** not found to relate to an avoidance of quality newspapers or public TV news as this was expected. As these results were also established in multiple country contexts they offer the response to RQ 3. In the following I will discuss potential consequences that the outcomes ONE to FIVE can have for liberal democracies.

ONE, hostile media perceptions were shown to be associated with an unwillingness to accept democratic decisions (Tsfati & Cohen, 2005), increased resentment against minori-

ties (Tsfati, 2007), decreased political participation (Feldman, Hart, Leiserowitz, Maibach, & Roser-Renouf, 2015; Moy, Torres, Tanaka, & McCluskey, 2005), acceptance of incivility in discourse (Post, 2017), as well as with corrective actions that potentially result in opinion polarization (Rojas, 2010). All these reactions can be expected for populist citizens as well, given their strong hostile media perceptions that were revealed within this study. Moreover, and very important in the present context, perceiving the media in general as an out-group could bias the perception of their reporting (Reid, 2012). This points to a vicious circle in which populist citizens (and with them society) are caught. Once populist citizens categorize the mainstream news as an out-group they are prone to perceive content spread by these outlets as hostile, what will not help these outlets – no matter what and how they report – to convince populist citizens of their quality. The relationship between populist citizens and the mainstream news would hence lastingly be damaged. I would like to point out that the complete rejection of the media as an institution based on sweeping accusations goes far beyond a healthy skepticism or even distrust that can potentially be dissolved. If populist leaders as Donald Trump transform mainstream news institutions via speeches and tweets into 'enemies of the people' and if populist citizens as in-group members of the people internalize respective cues, it will be difficult to impossible to dissolve these group boundaries.

TWO, to believe that the own opinion has majority status can reinforce the willingness to speak out the own opinion in public (Glynn, Hayes, & Shanahan, 1997; Matthes, Knoll, & Sikorski, 2018). If the willingness to speak out is enhanced for only one group in a given conflict, public opinion formation can be shaped by that group. More specifically, this louder group will potentially be perceived as representing a public majority (Noelle-Neumann, 1974). This does not have to be but can be problematic, particularly if the group that exerts such influence is a group that actually constitutes a societal minority (Moscovici et al., 1985). One consequence could be that the actual majority turns silent in light of the loud minority (Noelle-Neumann, 1974). In the introduction of this thesis, vote shares for populist parties were displayed for the countries under investigation in the presented studies. Although these parties were exceptionally successful within the past five years they almost never reached 50 percent of the vote share. However, only should this be the case these parties and their followers could rightfully insist on the majority claims that they make. As was clearly demonstrated within the analysis of this thesis, populist citizens perceive majority status despite the fact that electoral results continuously prove them wrong. This false consensus could lead populist citizens to speak out their views in public and set

off a spiraling process in which's consequence populist citizens are perceived to be the majority and in which non-populist citizens are perceived to be a minority. This spiraling process can further be reinforced by the mass media should they focus their reporting on populist intrigues, sensations and emotions to meet the market's demands (Mudde, 2004). In the worst case, the political field adapts to the thereby distorted public opinion and introduces measures that suit the taste of the minority without the (silent) majority opposing against it.

THREE, as was outlined already in Chapter 4, in the case of populist attitudes these two perceptual biases (hostile media perceptions and congruent public opinion perceptions) collide within an analysis of the persuasive press inference. Studies as provided by Al Gunther and colleagues have (as has the present study) shown, that both, hostile media effect and projection effect can co-occur and are hence not mutually contradictory. However, these studies also found significant correlations between hostile media and public opinion perceptions and with that demonstrated "simultaneous influences of personal opinion and perceptions of news coverage on estimates of public opinion" (Gunther & Christen, 2002, p. 186). More specifically, it was shown that if the news coverage is perceived unfavorable, public opinion estimates were to a significant extend adjusted into the same direction. Even though, the projection effect was still considerable, it was challenged via the persuasive press inference. Individuals in previous studies hence appeared to attribute mass media a persuasive potential and to see other people as susceptible to media effects. Following the findings provided within this study, these mechanisms do not seem to hold for populist citizens. In the presented model the path going from media perceptions to public opinion perceptions was absolutely insignificant. Although this can only have symbolic meaning as the effect was, as stated, insignificant, the b-value was even tilted into a negative direction. Moreover, a complementary analysis revealed that the contrast or difference between hostile media perceptions on the one hand and congruent public opinion perceptions on the other hand even increases, with increasing populist attitudes. Accordingly, if there is any relation between the perception of the media tone and public opinion in the case of populist citizens, it is a negative relationship that stands in contrast to what has thus far been found in studies on the persuasive press inference. The more hostile the media are being perceived by populist citizens, the more congruent toward the own opinion will they estimate public opinion. The only conclusion that can be drawn from this finding is that to populist citizens the media no longer serve as a reference for public opinion estimations. Following Tsfati (2003), who found similar patterns for individuals who are highly media

skeptic, this can be read as a sign of rigidity in that populist citizens stoically ignore the public opinion cues presented within the mass media and hence, no longer share the horizon provided by the media. An additional analysis indicated that this touches especially upon content shared by public TV news and quality newspapers. A question that directly follows these conclusions is what informs populist citizens' horizon if it is no longer the mass media. A part of this answer is given by the strong projection effect discussed above. What populist citizens perceive of as public opinion essentially resembles their very own and personal horizon of attitudes, values, and experiences. However, the further analyses of this thesis indicated that these perceptions might be bolstered by populist citizens news preferences.

FOUR, populist citizens strongly rely on tabloid newspapers, private TV news, alternative online news providers as well as Facebook to get politically informed. This media diet is particularly problematic for different reasons. Focusing on tabloid newspapers and private TV news first, these news genres are often also labeled as soft news media as their reporting is characterized by episodic reporting, the display of individual consequences of events, and personal and emotional style (e.g., sensationalism, scandals, and dramatization) more so than it is characterized by thematic reporting, a focus on societal consequences of events, and an impersonal and unemotional style, with the latter features being characteristic for hard news (Reinemann et al., 2016; Reinemann, Stanyer, Scherr, & Legnante, 2012). Tabloid newspapers were also shown to display populist strategies and populist styles to stronger degrees as compared to other news genres (Hameleers et al., 2017c; Klein, 1998; Wettstein, Esser, Büchel et al., 2018; Wettstein, Esser, Schulz et al., 2018). These features within communication were shown to increase political cynicism (Boukes & Boomgaarden, 2015) or to increase populist attitudes (Hameleers, Bos, & de Vreese, 2018; P. Müller et al., 2017). This can also be expected from the content that is offered to the populist audience on Facebook as well as on the websites of alternative news providers. Facebook pages of populist movements, parties and candidates were shown to "constantly mobilize against the *Altparteien* and perceived out-groups" (Stier, Posch, Bleier, & Strohmaier, 2017, p. 1382) and to "advocate for the people and blame or criticize elites" (Ernst et al., 2017, p. 1358). Alternative news providers "explicitly position themselves outside of or against the political and media mainstream" (Bachl, 2018, p. 259). The news preferences revealed by populist citizens in this study are hence great cause for concern. As Article III concludes, "based on what is known about the effects of soft news, it is difficult to imagine how this media choice can increase the low political trust levels that characterize populist citizens". Moreo-

ver, exposure to the own worldview will likely lead to reinforce prior attitudes what can result in a radicalization of personal opinions (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Stroud, 2008). On the aggregate level, the news audiences of tabloid newspapers, private TV news, Facebook, and alternative news media were found polarized in the present analyses as they are more populist than non-populist. These media genres or platforms are preferred to a significant stronger degree by citizens who have strong populist attitudes in comparison to those with lower populist attitudes. I consider this alarming for the reasons stated above but there is no reason for immediate concern. At this point, it is too early to conclude, that today's news audiences are completely polarized. This conclusion would only be reasonable, if the same patterns were found with regard to public TV news and quality newspapers, yet, of course, into the other directions with populist citizens using those to lesser degrees as compared to non-populist citizens.

FIVE, the analyses presented within this thesis did not support fears as to a complete audience polarization. In contrast to the expectations presented in Chapter 5, populist attitudes were not associated with an avoidance tendency of these hard news providers. Populist citizens selected public TV news and quality newspapers to the same degree as non-populist citizens. On first sight, this finding offers hope regarding two frequently discussed concerns with regard to the prosperity of liberal democratic societies. First, the results can comfort all those who fear that societies are falling apart due to the unprecedented media choice in today's media environments. In line with other research on news audience fragmentation, filter bubbles, a balkanization of news audiences or echo chambers, also this study did not provide support for the idea that high-choice media environments lead to increasing news audience fragmentation or polarization (Fletcher & Nielsen, 2017; Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2011; Trilling & Schoenbach, 2013; Weeks, Ksiazek, & Holbert, 2016; Zuiderveen Borgesius et al., 2016). The results of this study rather indicate that populist citizens have not left the mainstream tracks of news reporting to settle in essentially opinion-congruent news environments. To the contrary, they still approach information provided by mainstream news institutions to the same degree as do citizens who do not support the populist ideology. This is all the more true, as also tabloid newspapers and private TV news can be considered part of the mainstream. It can hence be presumed that there still is a shared public agenda and sufficient degree of societal integration prevailing in the investigated countries if news preferences are examined along the dimension of populist attitudes. Second, in turning to news genres that potentially offer counterattitudinal information as well as to genres that support the own view, populist citizens exhibit a fair

degree of cross-cutting news exposure. This can be considered good news for advocates of deliberative democracy who argue that citizens exposed to viewpoints opposed to their own develop certain beneficial democratic attitudes (for an overview see Friess & Eilders, 2015, p. 332). Indeed, exposure to non-like-minded information is argued to increase the awareness for political perspectives that diverge from the own (Castro Herrero, Nir, & Skovsgaard, 2018; Mutz, 2006; Price, Cappella, & Nir, 2002) and, if not consumed to extreme but to moderate extent, exposure to disagreement also increases the likelihood of voting (Castro Herrero & Hopmann, 2018). Against the background of the increasing vote share reported for populist parties, it is worth noting that populist citizens showed higher levels of cross-cutting news exposure than did non-populist citizens in this study. However, exposure to the opposite viewpoint can also decrease political interest and hamper political participation (Mutz, 2006) especially in the case of strong partisanship (Torcal & Maldonado, 2014). This emphasizes what has been well put by Kelly Garret, namely, that "individuals' tolerance toward (and occasional appetite for) counter-attitudinal political news should not be confused with dispassionate deliberation" (Garrett, 2013, p. 249). On the contrary, the motives that underlie exposure to the opposing view might not be beneficial at all for neither deliberation nor societal integration. I will discuss what I mean by that in more detail in the following.

If the individual findings presented in this study are reflected as a whole, they appear paradox and surprising to a fair degree. Populist citizens keep selecting into news by providers against which they actually hold significant levels of distrust and skepticism and which are within the populist narrative defined as enemies of the people. The social identity approach to populist attitudes applied in this study suggests that these media are perceived of as an out-group to the people, maybe even as enemies and certainly as liars. I argue, that the reservations that populist citizens must have about these media resulting from this categorization are unlikely to go together with an impartial approach or a neutral reception of the content provided by these media. It is therefore difficult to imagine that the individual embraces the counterattitudinal view encountered via exposure to the out-group source in a sense that could—in any way—be constructive for democratic deliberation or that could contribute to societal integration.

At this point, it is important to acknowledge that the analyses that provided these findings are studies of self-reported media use that come with many pitfalls. Most importantly, the analyses did not offer insights into the motives and gratifications that always surround news consumption. In fact, there is very little evidence, that especially partisans are moti-

vated to form balanced opinions (Garrett, 2013). Studies revealed that the approach to counterattitudinal content can be functional to defend the own position (Brenes Peralta, Wojcieszak, Lelkes, & de Vreese, 2017; Valentino, Banks, Hutchings, & Davis, 2009) or to surveille the opponent (Garrett & Stroud, 2014; Knobloch-Westerwick & Kleinman, 2011). If such motives are at work, counterattitudinal news exposure can also occur despite high levels of distrust. In the presence of other motivations trust becomes less relevant as a factor for news selection (Tsfati & Cappella, 2005). As even more trivial reasons could explain the turn toward non-like-minded information (e.g., the need to pass time or habits) it is not self-evident at all if populist citizens' use of public service news and quality newspapers is at all beneficial for democracy. Although, persuasion can result from counterattitudinal news exposure (Albarracín & Mitchell, 2004) and mistrustful audiences are not totally immune to media influences (Tsfati, 2003), reactions such as counter arguing or the confirmation of the own views, that is, that the mainstream media lie and conspire with the political elite against the people are at least as likely. Subsequently, exposure to the other side would result in a reinforcement of the own opinion as would exposure to the own view. Taken together, as long as research has not examined motives and gratifications that could explain the use of media genres that populist citizens decidedly reject, their exposure to public TV news and quality newspapers cannot be interpreted as the sheet-anchor against all other concerning findings discussed above.

Indeed, taken together, the findings presented are very consequential when they are seen in interplay. Concern also arises in view of the role that the mass media play, or ought to play, in democratic societies. According to traditional conceptions, one of the functions the media are thought to fulfill within democracies is the function of social integration (Ronneberger, 1985). In societies that are increasingly heterogeneous and complex, for example, following globalization or international wars, this function becomes ever more important. A plethora of interest groups needs to get organized to avoid conflict that can threaten modern societies' prosperity. According to idealist positions on the role of the media in democracies (e.g., Habermas, 1989), an integration of interests can only succeed if media provide a public sphere in which citizens learn about the diversity prevailing in the societies that they live in. That is, they are to learn to conceive society as a whole that goes beyond their own personal horizon and in which various groups exist that have own ways of life, worldviews and interests and that these groups are, despite their differences interdependent from each other (Maletzke, 1980). In such pluralistic contexts, the media are not only understood as factors necessary for societal integration but in some countries the me-

dia are even obliged to contribute to societal integration by state treaties or comparable charters (e.g., Rundfunkstaatsvertrag, 2016). Although this shall not be a matter of debate here, it is worth noting that these normative criteria and the expectations that they come with are discussed to be extremely challenging and difficult to meet by media institutions (e.g., Jarren, 2008; Nielsen, 2017).

But assuming that the mass media have an impact in the sense of societal integration, it appears considerably troublesome to imagine one specific group to turn away from this institution. Findings provided within this dissertation mutually indicate that citizens with populist attitudes are prone to do just that and as a consequence, end up to live in a parallel universe, separated from and lost for society as a whole. According to the line of argument presented herein, this separation carries out in several steps. **One**, populist citizens show strong general hostile media perceptions and skepticism directed particularly against those news genres, that likely contribute to integration most by following their public service remit, that is, public TV news. **Two**, in rejecting the mass media, populist citizens reject the mediated public of opinion, that is, the horizon shared by the media for all citizens to accept what shall bring about tolerance and empathy between groups with different interests. **Three**, populist citizens create their own horizon by projecting their own opinion onto public opinion that is **four**, likely amplified by their preference for news that support the own worldview.

Against this background, it can only be a small glimmer of hope that populist citizens have not (yet) completely turned away from quality news. However, as was discussed, the value of the consumption of hard news by populist citizens has still to be determined as it could be a function to defend and amplify the own view. The findings and conclusions derived suggest that populisms repercussion on the individual level and specifically the herein investigated relationships between populism and the media have a great potential to endanger the prosperity of liberal democracies by polarizing society into a populist and non-populist camp. I will close this discussion and this dissertation further below after having summarized the main contributions of this dissertation.

Display of Main Contributions

The presented study is located within the research on demand side populism. This literature is currently occupied with two main objectives. First, a measurement to populist attitudes is being searched and second, scholars attempt to understand and map the wider populist worldview going beyond populist attitudes. In developing a valid hierarchical

three-dimensional **measurement to populist attitudes** and in establishing links between these attitudes and **media perceptions**, **public opinion perceptions** and **news preferences** this dissertation offered a series of empirical contributions to both of these fields. The specific applications of the instrument were unprecedented within the research on demand side populism. Moving beyond anecdotal evidence and theoretical considerations, it was shown for the first time that populist citizens systematically reject the mainstream news and that they perceive their own view to be a majority view. Moreover, this study provided the first investigation of populist citizens news use with regard to mainstream news providers, social media platforms as well as alternative online news. With regard to the empirical contributions it remains to be said, that all studies but the last one had a **comparative character** to live up to the fact that populism prevails in many countries.

In addition to the empirical contributions, this study also provided abundant theoretical and conceptual developments. First, it proved to be particularly fruitful to understand populism as a **political belief system** for at least two different reasons. On the one hand, this notion offered a wider framework or structure within which the presented investigations could be located what also helped to structure the thesis. I started out with an investigation of the core of the belief system and subsequently, followed a path outwards into a direction particularly important for communication research. On the other hand, the notion of a wider system implies that only specific aspects of the populist belief system were examined within this thesis, while other aspects have been investigated by other scholars or not yet at all. I am suggesting, that this framework is also applicable to other demand side studies that aim to understand the wider populist worldview. To offer examples, populist citizens attitudes regarding federal courts, immigrants, conspiracy beliefs, academia, or even, should this ever be relevant, cats can be investigated as further idea-elements within the populist belief system. Second, to explain for why and how different idea-elements relate to one-another I introduced a **social identity approach to populist attitudes** that proposed an interplay of populist identity cues and social psychological reactions to cause the detected relationships. In the development of this approach I consulted the broader literatures of social psychology and communication effects as well as the more narrow fields on the hostile media effect, false consensus, persuasive press inference, and selective exposure. In doing so, theory and approaches from different social sciences were integrated into a larger interdisciplinary framework that proved to be particularly helpful to understand underlying mechanisms potentially causing populist citizens' media perceptions and media use. In doing so, it was also shown how viable communication theory is for making sense of con-

temporary populism across Western Democracies and vice versa, how research on populism can inform theories and approaches in communication science. For example, the persuasive press inference mechanism was found to be annulled for populist citizens. It is well worth considering if the social identity approach applied herein points to new moderators that could play a role for the persuasive press inference mechanism. The mechanism might depend upon levels of in-group identification, identity salience, or other factors important within the social identify perspective.

The social identity approach to populist attitudes was not put to an empirical test what opens ample **possibilities to future research**. Content analyses and media effect studies regarding the prevalence and influence of populist identity cues on perceptions, attitudes and behaviour will be necessary to establish the approach empirically. Moreover, the theoretical reasoning implied causalities to stronger degrees than this would have been permissible against the backdrop of the cross-sectional data that was used for the analyses. Longitudinal studies are demanded to learn about the causalities behind the relationships found herein.

Closing Personal Remark

In his famous study of the nature of belief systems in mass publics, Converse showed that belief systems proofed to reproduce well on the level of elites or among the highly educated whereas they did not reproduce at all among the more common citizens. In his view, a certain level of sophistication is needed for individuals to understand and internalize belief systems in all their depth and complexity. Survey responses provided by lower educated citizens were at times so inconsistent that Converse concluded that flipping a coin could have provided the same results. Against the background of his findings he closes to describe society with the following metaphor:

> "[F]or the familiar belief systems that, in view of their historical importance, tend most to attract the sophisticated observer, it is likely that an adequate mapping of a society (or, for that matter, the world) would provide a jumbled cluster of pyramids or a mountain range, with sharp delineation and differentiation in beliefs from elite apex to elite apex but with the mass bases of the pyramids overlapping in such profusion that it would be impossible to decide where one pyramid ended and another began" (1964, p. 66).

It is difficult to envision a polarization of the mass to be possible among this overlapping mountain range pictured by Converse. Against the background of the findings provided within this dissertation, this might be different for the case of the populist belief system.

The ideologies' thin-character makes it particularly accessible to all parts of the population, it's Manichean outlook is simple and easy to digest, it is appealing to everyone through the identity claims that it makes. The worldview that populism promotes separates society into two groups, one that is good and one that is bad, that is, it envisions two steep mountains with a deep valley in-between. This dissertation provided evidence for a repercussion of this worldview on the individual level. Those who agree to the populist ideas are prone to separate from the rest of the population, leading society into polarization.

Populism is discussed as being also beneficial for democracies as long as it acts *within* the democratic system. It can identify discontent and, according to some authors, even integrate segments of the population into the political process that have been overlooked within the past decades (Laclau, 2005). Populism can broaden the political agenda and in general, "amend the shortcomings and the broken promises of the representative system" (Abts & Rummens, 2007, p. 405). As findings of this study showed, the potential that populism polarizes (rather than that it integrates societies as argued by Laclau) is fairly significant and this potential is carried out in ways that are not obvious at all but that are hidden and sneaky and in that sense quite perfidious. If populism is unleashed within the public, it might all to quickly give up on its merits to reveal a face that is full of scorn and ridicule regarding all that is important to liberal democracy. I am disclosing my personal view here at last because I strongly agree to Matthijs Roodujin when he says that, "academics must speak out and warn about where we are heading" and that we have "a moral obligation to protect liberal democracy" (2016, p. 317) as this system provides us as scientists with the circumstances under which our research can thrive. As there is no question that this system also provides all types of freedom to us as citizens this obligation multiplies.

To reiterate one more time, without the aim to dramatize more so than would be necessary, I point out that the findings provided in this thesis are deeply concerning. It is the job of social scientists to carefully observe societal developments tied to populism, to work on solutions in all fields and to speak up against and deconstruct the evil that populism encloses.

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Appendix A : Articles

Article I

Measuring populist attitudes on three dimensions

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Research Note

Measuring Populist Attitudes on Three Dimensions

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Abstract

Theoretically, populism has been conceptualized as a political ideology with three sub-dimensions: anti-elitism attitudes, a preference for popular sovereignty, and a belief in the homogeneity and virtuousness of the people. However, empirical research to date has treated populist attitudes as a unidimensional construct. To address this issue, we propose to conceptualize populist attitudes as a latent higher-order construct with three distinct first-order dimensions. A 12-item inventory was developed using two survey studies conducted in Switzerland in 2014 and 2015. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were used to test the construct validity of this measure of populist attitudes. The measurement that is proposed allows for a fine-grained study of populist attitudes in the general public.

In the national elections of 2014, 2015, and 2016, the citizens of European countries such as Sweden, Finland, Poland, Denmark, and Austria have shown strong support for populist parties and/or their candidates, as indicated by the proportion of voters who sympathized with the Swedish Democrats (12.9%), the Finns (17.7%), the Law and Justice Party (51.5%), the Danish People's Party (21.1%), or the Freedom Party of Austria (49.7%). Many authors are trying to identify the reasons for this growing success of populist parties (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008a; Mény & Surel, 2002; Mudde, 2004). Voting for specific parties that are a priori categorized as populist has lately been connected with a set of populist attitudes. These attitudes have been found

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to correlate positively with support for populist parties and movements (Akkerman, Mudde, & Zaslove, 2014; Hawkins, Riding, & Mudde, 2012; Hawkins & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014). In research to date, populist attitudes have been conceptualized as a unidimensional measure. However, we argue that a unidimensional model fails to adequately describe populist attitudes, as it does not account for the different political ideas that have been identified as distinct yet correlated facets of a populist ideology (Mudde, 2004). Therefore, the present study proposes and tests a three-dimensional hierarchical measurement of populist attitudes. Such a three-dimensional model is not only able to identify populist attitudes in its entirety (i.e., attitudes indicating strong support for all three dimensions) but can also distinguish between different varieties of populist support (i.e., attitudes strongly supporting only one or two dimensions).

Populism as an Ideology

Authors frequently argue that populism is a "notoriously vague term" (Canovan, 1999, p. 3), which entails a certain "conceptual slipperiness" (Taggart, 2000, p. 1). Most recently, populism has been defined as a communication style (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007), a political strategy (Weyland, 2001), and a political ideology (Mudde, 2004). This study takes the last perspective, defining populism as a "thin-centred ideology" (Mudde, 2004, p. 544) comprising a "set of political ideas" (Hawkins 2010, p. 5) about the structure of power in society (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008b). More precisely, according to the populist ideology, society has a Manichean structure, as it is "ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus the 'corrupt elite,'" and politics is nothing but "an expression of the general will of the people" (Mudde, 2004, p. 543). With that, populism is defined as a thin-centered ideology, which can become a thick-centered ideology when it is combined with more complete ideologies, such as nativism—right-wing populism—or socialism—left-wing populism (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser 2013). From this definition, we extract three political ideas that together form populism: (1) an anti-elitism approach, with elites seen as corrupt, betraying, and deceiving the people; (2) a belief in unrestricted popular sovereignty that leaves the power to the people; and (3) an understanding of the people as being homogenous and virtuous (Wirth et al., 2016). When populism is conceived of as a set of political ideas or as a multidimensional construct, researchers should operationalize and measure populist attitudes accordingly. In the following section, we argue that this has not been followed with sufficient diligence in prior research on populist attitudes among the general public.

Aside from two early attempts at the end of the twentieth century to identify populist attitudes within the United States (Axelrod, 1967; Farrell & Laughin, 1976), it has only been recently that populist attitudes have received significant attention from researchers. Akkerman et al., (2014; see also Hawkins et al., 2012) developed a one-dimensional conceptualization of populist attitudes. This measure reflects two of the three key elements of populism identified above: popular sovereignty and an antagonism toward what is perceived to be an evil political elite. This instrument has been tested in the United States (Hawkins et al., 2012), the Netherlands (Akkerman et al., 2014), Chile (Hawkins & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014),

and recently also in Flanders (Spruyt, Keppens, & van Droogenbroeck, 2016). The inventory comprises six items measuring populist attitudes (e.g., "The politicians in Congress need to follow the will of the people"). These researchers used principle component analysis to demonstrate that populist attitudes form a single dimension distinct from elitist and pluralist attitudes toward democracy. The successful replication of the model in three different countries leads to the conclusion that "populist attitudes are widespread and latent" (Hawkins & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014, p. 5). In a construct validity test, the authors correlated the populism measure with demographic, social, and political indicators. In the Chilean case affiliates of leftist parties showed stronger populist attitudes compared with partisans of rightist parties. However, populist attitudes were unrelated to demographics (Hawkins & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014). In the Netherlands, populist attitudes were correlated with support for parties that are often categorized as populist (i.e., the Socialist Party and the Party for Freedom) (Akkerman et al., 2014). Additionally, it was shown that in the United States, populist attitudes correlate positively with strong affiliations to either liberal or conservative ideologies (Akkerman et al., 2014). A strength of these papers was to show that populism is a concept that is distinct from other political ideologies, such as elitism and pluralism. However, two problems with this conceptualization remain. First, it lacks to depict the idea of the people as a homogenous group that is wise and virtuous. Homogeneity and virtuousness are essential to the definition of populism as used in this research as well as in prior studies. Taggart (2000) stresses the importance of this idea by declaring the people as "*the* defining feature of populism" (p. 91; emphasis in original). Following his explications and those of others, this central feature of populism encloses more than the demand for popular sovereignty. This aspect of people-centrism entails an understanding of a monolithic people that is altogether good, honest, and upright. In this vein, the people share the same values and interests. In addition, the people is seen as a coherent entity ready to withstand any external threats (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008a; Mudde, 2004). A measurement that fails to consider this dimension is unable to fully grasp thin-centered populism. Second, because of this conceptualization's unidimensionality, it is impossible to detect varieties of populist attitudes, such as the branch of populist thinking that predominantly promotes the notion of a reified popular will and is less intensely attached to the notion of a conspiring elite.

A Three-Dimensional Construct

Building on the prior research outlined in the preceding section, the present article aims to develop a more finely grained inventory with which to measure the concept of populism. Previous reasoning on populism suggests that the populist ideology is built on three main political ideas. If we wish to measure the degree of individual support of populism, an instrument is needed that delineates between support for each of these three ideas. When a full populist is assumed to hold strong anti-elitism attitudes, a strong belief in unrestricted popular sovereignty, and an understanding of the people as being homogenous and virtuous, then populist attitudes can be conceptualized as a second-order factor made up of these three distinct sub-dimensions as first-order factors.

There are several reasons to suggest a three-dimensional structure of populist attitudes. First, the empirical measurement of a construct of interest should reflect all facets that are derived from the underlying theory. When populist attitudes are defined by three elements, then it is reasonable to expect three dimensions that are part of a higher-order latent construct that represents populist attitudes. If one dimension was to be missing from the operationalization, the measurement would not reflect all facets of populist attitudes, but rather an incomplete version of the ideology. Second, if populism is conceptualized as a three-dimensional construct, then these attitude dimensions can be activated in varying degrees in an individual mind. For example, although there may be many people who hold anti-elitism attitudes, not all of them favor popular sovereignty or perceive the people as a homogenous and virtuous group. This reality is not reflected in a one-dimensional measure, which treats individuals scoring high on one dimension as both, similar to individuals scoring high on another dimension and to individuals scoring moderately on all dimensions. Applying this logic, people who hold anti-elitism attitudes but who do not see direct democratic procedures as a solution to compensate for the wrongdoings of the political elite would be indistinguishable from individuals who show the opposite pattern of attitudes—that is, who do not see the political elite as corrupt, but who favor direct democracy. In treating populist attitudes as a single dimension, researchers cannot distinguish between these two different views on politics. In contrast, a three-dimensional measurement would enable the researcher to detect these different attitude patterns.

The third advantage of a three-dimensional measurement is the more precise predictions it allows researchers to make. In the example given in the preceding paragraph—describing people who hold anti-elitism attitudes yet who do not demand popular sovereignty—the degree of populism within a given society could easily be overestimated if a one-dimensional measure was used. Such an instrument could identify individuals as populists even if they were in fact only dissatisfied with the work of the current government. In contrast, an instrument based on a three-dimensional conceptualization would require that individuals score sufficiently high on all three dimensions to be considered to hold populist attitudes. Therefore, our assumption is that populist attitudes are a latent second-order construct made up of three lower-order dimensions: anti-elitism attitudes, a preference for unrestricted popular sovereignty, and a belief in the homogeneity and virtuousness of the people. We will test this assumption on the basis of two separate data sets using exploratory and confirmative factor analysis. To provide further evidence of construct validity, we will include measures of elitist and pluralist attitudes into our analysis and contrast these to the three populist attitude dimensions proposed before.

Method

Data and Procedure

To develop a scale for the three-dimensional structure of populist attitudes, two surveys were conducted over the course of 6 months. The first study was an online survey conducted in December 2014 on a nation-wide sample of Swiss respondents ($N = 400$). The second survey was conducted online in April 2015, but

based on a Swiss sample only taken from the city of Zurich and its surrounding regions ($N = 1{,}260$). In both studies, samples were recruited from online access panels, applying a quota procedure with regard to age and gender. These samples approach the population of interest's characteristics in terms of age (national sample: $M = 43.71$; $SD = 15.57$; regional sample: $M = 51.86$; $SD = 13.80$) and gender (national sample: 50% female; regional sample: 47.1% female).

Measurement

We examined populist attitudes by measuring three sub-dimensions: anti-elitism attitudes, demand for popular sovereignty, and belief in the homogeneity and virtuousness of the people. The initial item pool comprised 21 items that were assumed to reflect the three dimensions. Most of these items were taken from previous studies and, thus, depicted anti-elitism and people's sovereignty (Akkerman et al., 2014; Hawkins et al., 2012; Hawkins & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014). A literature review and a preliminary analysis of news coverage containing populist communication led to additional items tracing these two dimensions. This resulted in nine items reflecting anti-elitism attitudes (anti) and another six items reflecting a demand for popular sovereignty (sov). After consulting literature on the perception of in-group homogeneity and entitativity (Carpenter & Radhakrishnan, 2002; Lickel at al., 2000; Quattrone & Jones, 1980), six items were chosen to assess the belief in a homogeneous and virtuous people (hom). Across all three dimensions, various items depict the Manichean perspective of populism by setting the entity of "the people" against the entity of "the politicians" or the "government." Survey participants rated all items using 5-point Likert scales ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree* (see Supplementary Tables A1 and A3 for question wording in English and German).

Elitist attitudes were measured relying on three items that were taken from the existing literature (Akkerman et al., 2014; Hawkins & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014). Partially, these items were rephrased to consistently refer to the idea that the political elite (i.e., "the government" or "politicians") is in charge of important decisions and not educated experts (i.e., "independent experts" and "successful business people"). Pluralist attitudes were measured using four items. Two indicators were taken from previous studies (Akkerman et al., 2014; Hawkins & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014), and two items were added to also depict acknowledgment of minority views and opposing views in society (see Supplementary Table A2 for question wording).

Results

The 21 items from the populism scale were submitted to an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using the promax rotation method. The results of the factor analysis relying on the data from the national sample revealed a three-dimensional structure. To optimize the solution, items were excluded when communalities or factor loadings were too low or when items loaded on more than one factor. This process was then stopped before factors reached an item number lower than four. At the end of this process, 15 items remained: five items that reflect an anti-elitism attitude, four items that refer to the

sovereignty of the people, and six items that expressed a belief in a homogeneous and virtuous people. These items share variance to a high degree (KMO = 0.89). The three factors together account for 55% of the variance (Factor 1 = 35%; Factor 2 = 12%; Factor 3 = 8%, eigenvalues = 5.68, 2.26, 1.59, respectively). Factor loadings ranged between .632 and .896. Homogeneity items loaded strongly on the first factor, anti-elitism items on the second factor, and sovereignty items on the third factor. No serious cross-loadings occurred, and reliability was satisfactory for all three factors (see Supplementary Table A1, also for communalities, mean values, and *SD*s). Using the data from the regional sample, the analysis was replicated and resulted in the same factor structure (Supplementary Table A2). Thus, preliminary exploratory factor analyses support the assumed three-dimensional structure of populist attitudes. Interestingly, these analyses led to the exclusion of some of the items used in previous studies (Akkerman et al., 2014; Hawkins et al., 2012, 2014); these items were all replaced by new items. However, four of six items (items 2, 5, 8, and 9) used in prior studies were retained in the updated version of the measure.

To test the robustness of this factor structure, the dimensionality of populist attitudes was further examined in a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using the R 3.2.0 package lavaan (Rosseel, 2012). This was done for both the national and regional sample. Populist attitudes were modeled as a second-order factor with three proposed distinct sub-dimensions. Items were permitted to load only on the factors they were expected to load on. A first test of a three-dimensional second-order factor model with the national data indicated an acceptable fit ($\chi^2 = 210.7$, $df = 87$, $p \leq .001$; comparative fit index = 0.954; root mean squared error of approximation = 0.06). To improve model fit, modification indices were examined. The output indicated that three items caused problems (i.e., high covariation with other items on their factor and even with items across factors). These three items were excluded from the analysis. The resulting model showed a better fit to our data (Table 1, Panel A). All items load substantially (loadings higher than .5 in all cases) on their hypothesized latent factors. Furthermore, the latent first-order factors show significant loadings on the proposed second-order factor that represents populist attitudes (Table 1, Panel B). This result is in line with the hypothesis that populist attitudes are a latent higher-order construct made up of the three lower-order dimensions of anti-elitism attitudes, a preference for unrestricted popular sovereignty, and a belief in the homogeneity and virtuousness of the people.

To further corroborate the validity of this conceptualization of populist attitudes, two additional steps were taken. First, the three-dimensional second-order factor model was compared with two one-dimensional models of populist attitudes. The first single-factor model included the six items from Akkerman et al. (2014). As we have implemented the full six-item set only in the national survey, the model could only be estimated for this data set. The second one-dimensional model used the 12-item set introduced above. This model was estimated on the basis of both available data sets. These one-factor models assume that the covariance among the items can be accounted for by a single latent variable, as implied by existing operationalizations of populist attitudes (Hawkins et al., 2012). The fit statistics in Panel A of Table 1 indicate that a hierarchical multidimensional model of populist attitudes is superior to all three one-dimensional models.

Second, we used 12 populism items from the regional data set to test whether populism, elitism, and pluralism are distinct constructs. This analysis resulted in five factors, each of which always only comprised items of one specific construct with loadings higher than .539 and cross-loadings lower than .2 (see Supplementary Table A2). Finally, CFA yielded that both, elitism and pluralism, correlate negatively with all three sub-dimensions that we have conceptualized (anti-elitism and elitism: $r = -.15$, $p < .001$; anti-elitism and pluralism: $r = -.04$, $p < .05$; sovereignty and elitism: $r = -.35$, $p < .001$; sovereignty and pluralism: $r = -.03$; $p = .07$; homogeneity and elitism: $r = -.07$, $p = .001$; homogeneity and pluralism: $r = -.09$, $p < .001$; $N = 1{,}260$). In sum, the more participants agreed to either one of the three populism dimensions, the less they endorsed elitist or pluralist attitudes. These results provide evidence that the present threefold conception of populism is a valid construct that is distinct from other conceptions of democracy, that is, elitism and pluralism.

Discussion

Research on measuring populism in public opinion surveys has grown in the past decade because of the rise of populist parties in Western democracies. The present article introduces a refined instrument for measuring populist attitudes. From extant definitions of populism as a thin ideology, we inferred three dimensions: an anti-elitism approach, the belief in unrestricted popular sovereignty, and an understanding of the people as being homogenous and virtuous. A rigorous empirical test using different data sets clearly demonstrates that a second-order model with three dimensions of populism is superior to a one-dimensional conceptualization in a number of ways.

First, as our major goal was to create a theoretically sound and exhaustive instrument to measure populist attitudes, we followed a deductive approach: operationalization was strictly derived from a broadly accepted definition of populism, from which the three most important notions underlying the theoretical concept were extracted. Second, the robustness of the three-dimensional second-order factor model was successfully tested using CFA. In prior studies, only exploratory factor analyses were used. However, EFA is not suitable for construct validity testing. All items are assumed to load on all factors, making CFA more appropriate for testing hypotheses that incorporate the dimensionality of populist attitudes. The analysis revealed three distinct dimensions that are positively correlated with each other and belong to one higher-order latent construct—that is, populist attitudes. Third, the successful replication of the model in two independent samples—the findings from both the national and regional samples confirmed the hypothesized model structure—further increases the credibility of the present approach. Fourth, in a final step of validation, we showed that all three populist attitude dimensions are also distinct from elitist and pluralist attitudes.

Finally, looking at possible applications of this instrument in future research, this tool allows researchers to investigate specific research questions. Researchers may want to examine to what extent affiliation to populist parties stems from anti-elitism attitudes, a general support of the idea of popular sovereignty, the perception of the people as homogenous and virtuous, or a combination of these dimensions. Prediction of vote choice can be further improved by adding a specific political ideology (i.e., left

Table 1
Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results of the One- and Three-Factor Populist Attitude Models
A. Fit statistics for one- and three-factor models

	National sample Switzerland ($N = 400$)			Regional sample Zurich ($N = 1{,}260$)	
	1-Factor model "Akkerman"	1-Factor model	3-Factor model	1-Factor model	3-Factor model
χ^2	87.147	731.575	97.541	2,729.825	136.207
df	9	54	51	54	51
CFI	0.891	0.655	0.976	0.591	0.987
RMSEA	0.147	0.177	0.048	0.198	0.036
SRMR	0.066	0.126	0.044	0.138	0.029

Note. CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean squared error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root mean square residual.

(continued)

B. Standardized factor loadings for the three-factor models

Variables	National sample Switzerland				Regional sample Zurich			
	Anti-elitism attitudes	Demand for sovereignty of the people	Belief in homogeneity of the people	Populist attitude (2nd order)	Anti-elitism attitudes	Demand for sovereignty of the people	Belief in homogeneity of the people	Populist attitude (2nd order)
anti1[ref]	.802**				.798**			
anti2	.730**				.736**			
anti3	.613**				.574**			
anti5	.717**				.694**			
sov1[ref]		.838**				.818**		
sov2		.799**				.805**		
sov3		.819**				.855**		
sov4		.670**				.694**		
hom1			.773**				.812**	
hom2[ref]			.697**				.817**	
hom3			.798**				.807**	
hom4			.559**				.547**	
anti				.824**				.678**
sov				.712**				.659**
hom				.556**				.641**

Note. CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean squared error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root mean square residual.
**$p \leq .001$; [ref] = reference item.

or right wing) as a fourth dimension to the model. The three dimensions measure the thin-centered ideology of populism; yet, the model is flexible enough to be extended to measure thick forms of populism as well. Furthermore, regarding a large corpus of research dealing with populist communication in media content (Akkerman, 2011; Bos, van der Brug, & de Vreese, 2011; Rooduijn, 2014; Wirth et al., 2016), this new instrument enables researchers to trace specific communication effects on the three attitude dimensions, as not all populist statements found in the media will influence all of the three dimensions in the same way.

The present analysis also carries limitations. Data were collected using online access panels from only one country, and online surveys always carry a high risk of participants being distracted while filling out the questionnaire or quickly clicking through the questions without paying real attention to the content. We therefore recommend that future studies replicate the present findings using different samples and survey modes. Furthermore, this study was conducted in Switzerland, where a direct democracy is practiced. As this is exceptional among Western democracies, the instrument—developed for international research—should be tested in other countries as well. Moreover, we did not study how populist attitudes are related to vote choice or sociodemographic variables. Thus, another avenue for follow-up research would be to look at how the updated measure predicts vote choice or party affiliation, further corroborating the construct validity of the present measure.

Supplementary Data

Supplementary Data are available at IJPOR online.

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Article II

We are the people and you are Fake News. A social identity approach to populist citizens' hostile media and false consensus perceptions

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We Are the People and You Are Fake News: A Social Identity Approach to Populist Citizens' False Consensus and Hostile Media Perceptions

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the relationships between citizens' populist attitudes, perceptions of public opinion, and perceptions of mainstream news media. Relying on social identity theory as an explanatory framework, this article argues that populist citizens assume that public opinion is congruent with their own opinion and that mainstream media reporting is hostile toward their own views. To date, only anecdotal evidence suggests that both assumptions are true. The relationships are investigated in a cross-sectional survey with samples drawn from four Western European countries ($N = 3{,}354$). Multigroup regression analysis supports our hypotheses: False consensus and hostile media perceptions can clearly be linked to populist attitudes in all four regions under investigation. Moreover, our findings show a gap between hostile media perceptions and congruent public opinion perceptions, which increases with increasing populist attitudes to the point that the persuasive press inference mechanism is annulled.

Keywords

populist attitudes, populism, hostile media perceptions, false consensus, social identity theory

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Various European and U.S. elections of the past decade illustrate a rather great demand for populism at the citizen level. Populist parties gain a notable share of the vote in many Western countries, and their potential influence on liberal democracy is intensively discussed (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012; Waisbord, 2018). These developments are paralleled by an increase in research devoted to populist attitudes, which reflect the support for populism on the individual level (Schulz et al., 2017). With the general aim to learn more about those who potentially vote for populist parties, studies have collected information on populist citizens' sociodemographics, general attitudes, and voting preferences (e.g., Akkerman, Mudde, & Zaslove, 2014; Rooduijn, 2017; Schulz et al., 2017; van Hauwaert & van Kessel, 2017), as well as about their personality (Bakker, Rooduijn, & Schumacher, 2016), their media preferences (Hameleers, Bos, & de Vreese, 2017a), and specific psychological dispositions (Elchardus & Spruyt, 2016; Steenvoorden & Harteveld, 2017). However, quite a lot remains unknown regarding the question of what unites populist voters, especially because most studies are single-country studies that focus on either left- or right-wing populism only (Rooduijn, 2017). Therefore, it is difficult to deduce comprehensive conclusions about the general character of populist citizens.

However, anecdotal evidence points to as yet unstudied characteristics that populist citizens may share. Specifically, news reports about populist politicians and populist citizens suggest that hostile media perceptions and false consensus beliefs could unify those who support populist ideas. For example, media reports document chants of "We are the people" at demonstrations for populist movements as well as attacks against the media by populist actors or their followers, calling them fake news or system media (e.g., Jamieson, 2017; Somaskanda, 2017). Additionally, theoretical work speaks to the possible importance of anti-media rhetoric (Krämer, 2018) and opinion majority claims (Taggart, 2000) for populism at the communicator level. In combination with the observations captured within anecdotal evidence, these theoretical accounts motivate the assumption that populism, hostile media perceptions, and false consensus beliefs can also be connected at the citizen level.

This article therefore focuses on the following three research questions. First, are hostile media perceptions and congruent public opinion perception constant companions of populist attitudes, or does anecdotal evidence distort the impression of the populist conception of these entities? Second, if these relations are systematic, do they also travel across country borders? Third, how can theory account for a co-occurrence of populist attitudes, hostile media perceptions, and false consensus beliefs? This article is devoted to developing responses to all three questions. While the last question will be addressed on a theoretical level, the first and second question will undergo empirical testing.

To find a theoretical explanation for the posited relationships between populist attitudes, congruent public opinion beliefs, and hostile media perceptions, this article builds on a social identity approach to populist attitudes. Specifically, we will discuss the proposed relations as consequences of identification with the in-group of the people. Thereby, we develop a theoretical framework that relies on a large body of studies dedicated to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), false consensus (Ross,

Greene, & House, 1977), and hostile media perceptions (Vallone, Ross, & Lepper, 1985). Moreover, we will also draw on previous research devoted to populist communication (e.g., Reinemann, Aalberg, Esser, Strömbäck, & de Vreese, 2017), which is discussed as the provider of cues regarding the specific understanding of the in-group and out-group(s).

With this approach, we aim to integrate the investigation of populist attitudes into research that is at the core of communication science. Interestingly, for example, our assumptions contrast findings regarding the persuasive press inference. While several studies show that public opinion is often inferred from media tone perceptions as a function of beliefs in media effects on others (cf. Gunther, 1998; Gunther & Chia, 2001), we argue below that this mechanism might not be applicable for populist citizens. We will use the social identity approach to populist attitudes to explain this potentially unique relationship between hostile media perceptions and false consensus beliefs in the case of populist citizens.

Research on both false consensus and hostile media perceptions has identified a large number of critical consequences that these perceptions may have for liberal democracies. For example, hostile media perceptions relate to the unwillingness to accept democratic decisions (Tsfati & Cohen, 2005), increased minority alienation (Tsfati, 2007), decreased political participation (Feldman, Hart, Leiserowitz, Maibach, & Roser-Renouf, 2015; Moy, Torres, Tanaka, & McCluskey, 2005), acceptance of incivility (Post, 2017), and corrective actions that may result in opinion polarization (Rojas, 2010). The most profound consequence of false consensus effects may be that members of groups that rely on false consensus have a stronger willingness to express their own opinions (Glynn, Hayes, & Shanahan, 1997; Matthes, Knoll & von Sikorski, 2018). This may make their group appear stronger in number than it actually is, which has respective implications for public opinion formation processes (Noelle-Neumann, 1974). If hostile media and false consensus perceptions co-occur with populist attitudes, their potential threat to liberal democracy could multiply.

To address the two empirical aims mentioned above, we rely on survey data gathered in four European greater regions: Berlin, Zurich, Paris, and London, as well as their respective surrounding rural areas. Populist attitudes are treated as a predictor for opinion and media perceptions in a multigroup regression analysis. Our correlational findings demonstrate that the hypothesized perceptual pattern is stable in all four countries: as a person's populist attitudes strengthen, the public opinion climate is perceived to be more congruent with their own opinion and the mass media's tone is perceived to be more incongruent with their own opinion. Moreover, we established evidence for a gap between hostile media and congruent public opinion perceptions that increases with increasing populist attitudes to the extent that the persuasive press inference mechanism is annulled for those with strong populist attitudes. The social identity framework for populist citizens' perceptions of media and public opinion offers ideas for underlying psychological mechanisms that could cause these perceptions. In the following, this approach will be introduced.

A Social Identity Approach to Populism

Researchers have argued that populism (Krämer, 2014; Reinemann et al., 2017), hostile media perceptions (Hartmann & Tanis, 2013; Reid, 2012), and public opinion perceptions (e.g., Mullen, Dovidio, Johnson, & Copper, 1992) are related to social categorization and social identity. Hence, social identity theory provides a fruitful framework within which links between populist attitudes, public opinion, and media perceptions can be established.

Social identity and self-categorization theories base their argument on the human need for a positive social identity (e.g., Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971; cf. Turner, 2000). Social identity accompanies personal identity as components of the human self-concept and defines the self as a member of different social groups. Within the process of social categorization, individuals identify with different groups. If a specific group membership is made salient, the desire to achieve, maintain, or enhance a positive value linked to this group membership is triggered (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This process involves social comparisons that serve to identify in-group superiority over respective out-groups. Specifically, the salience of a group membership sets the individual's perceptions to accentuate intragroup similarities regarding positive attributes that the in-group shares (in-group favoritism) and to emphasize intergroup differences regarding negative attributes that the out-group shares (out-group discrimination) (Kelly, 1989; Rubin & Badea, 2007; Turner, 2000; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987).

Central to the process of social categorization is the mechanism of depersonalization. When following group prototypes, individuals no longer perceive people as distinctive individuals but as better or worse approximations of the group prototype. The perception of others and the perception of the self are depersonalized. Depersonalization has a notable effect on the self, as it causes "thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and behavior to conform to [the] prototype of the in-group" (Hogg & Reid, 2006, p. 10). Salient social categorizations—the offer of social categories to which one can adhere—causes these social identity mechanisms to unroll. In the following, we will link insights from research on populism to the ideas of social identity theory to show that populism is just this kind of offer.

Social Categories Established by Populism

This article follows an ideational approach to populism that has been strongly applied in the fields of political science (e.g., van Kessel, 2015) and communication science (e.g., Aalberg, Esser, Reinemann, Strömbäck, & de Vreese, 2017; Wirth et al., 2016). According to this approach, populism is understood as a thin political ideology. This ideology understands society to be split into two homogeneous groups: the pure people and the corrupt elite. The former is assumed to be defrauded by the latter in that the latter does not follow the principle of popular sovereignty as the ideology indicates it should (Mudde, 2004). Populism can develop into a thick ideology (e.g., right-wing or left-wing populism) as soon as full ideologies such as fascism or socialism are added to it (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2015).

However, independent of how the ideology is enriched, the antagonistic relation between the people and the political elite always is a key element of populism. This is acknowledged by different definitions of or operationalization approaches to populism (e.g., Canovan, 1981; Jagers & Walgrave, 2007; March, 2017; Müller, 2016; Reinemann et al., 2017; Weyland, 2001). This distinction is also particularly relevant for the upcoming argument.

The antagonism between the people and the elite is often illustrated by the phrase "us versus them." Thereby, the "us" stands for the pure people and the likeminded, such as the populist politician, that is, the in-group. "Them" refers to out-groups, most notably, the political elite currently running the government, but minorities such as immigrants or religious groups are also often named in this respect (e.g., Jagers & Walgrave, 2007; Wirth et al., 2016). The populist ideology thus sketches a very definite social structure that consists of merely two groups: one that is good and one that is bad (also "Manichean outlook" of populism; for example, Mudde, 2004, p. 544). With that populism follows a form of "identity politics" (Müller, 2016, p. 3): It offers clear social categories along which self-categorization can unfold.

For populism to exert this potential, its ideas must be publicly diffused. The means for this diffusion is populist communication, which is employed mainly by populist political actors (e.g., Ernst, Engesser, Büchel, Blassnig, & Esser, 2017) but also occurs within media coverage (Krämer, 2014). Populist communication is defined as a set of features or elements of communicative messages that resonate with the populist ideology. Its core messages are therefore related to the people, to the political elite, and to popular sovereignty (March, 2017; Reinemann et al., 2017; Wirth et al., 2016). They directly mirror the thin definition of the populist ideology and together promote the populist division of society: the social categories of the good people and the evil political elite. As populism is defined to be adaptable to other concepts, we argue that populist communication must also be addressed as an extendable concept. For example, in order to describe more distinguished shapes of populism, it might seem useful to regard exclusionist messages (cf. Reinemann et al., 2017), opinion majority claims (cf. Taggart, 2000), and anti-media rhetoric (cf. Krämer, 2018) as additional elements of populist communication. This idea will be further addressed below.

Populist Attitudes and the Identification to the In-Group of the People

Citizens who support the core ideas of populism are identified as those who hold populist attitudes (Akkerman et al., 2014). More specifically, they hold anti-elitist attitudes, believe in a homogeneous and virtuous people, and show a high demand for popular sovereignty (Schulz et al., 2017). They have internalized the Manichean divide of society that is promoted within populism and self-categorize as group members of the people. Accordingly, they view the political elite as malicious and the people as a virtuous unity and feel that they belong to the latter. Prior research has shown that populist attitudes can be reinforced by the core messages of populist communication (Müller et al., 2017). Moreover, repeated exposure to media representations of the societal divide promoted by populism is argued to trigger

identification with the in-group of the people and foster the "development of schema-based in-group or out-group bias in the perception and evaluation of social phenomena" (Krämer, 2014, p. 55).

To date, the literature on populism still lacks a profound discussion of the potential consequences of identification to the in-group of the people—that is, to what degree this specific identification can stimulate generalized attitudes, biased perceptions, or comprehensive categorizations regarding diverse societal entities. In this context, several authors have referred to the term "populist worldview" or have described populism as a "mental map" to express the idea that populist attitudes do not come alone but their internalization by the individual has consequences for the perception and comprehension of political and social reality (Elchardus & Spruyt, 2016; Hawkins, 2010; Krämer, 2014; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2015).

By tracing populist citizens' perceptions of public opinion and the media, we will investigate elements of this populist worldview in greater detail. We argue that false consensus and perceptions of a hostile media follow group psychological mechanisms triggered by an identification to the people. Moreover, populist communication is argued to specify in-group and out-group prototypes. Specifically, opinion majority claims and anti-media rhetoric employed by populist leaders are discussed to accentuate in-group and out-group characteristics. Drawing on the approaches of false consensus and the hostile media effect, we outline below how the interplay of populist cues and in-group identification with the people makes way for these biased perceptions to unfold.

We Are the People! Populist Attitudes and False Consensus Perceptions

The concept of the people is central to populism (Taggart, 2000). According to the populist ideology, the people is a homogeneous and virtuous group, a coherent entity of a generally good character that shares the same values and interests (Mudde, 2004; Wirth et al., 2016). By defining the people as such, populism constructs a homogeneous in-group to which individuals can adhere. However, this alone does not explain why individuals who identify with the group of the people should project their own opinion onto the whole population and believe that their opinion has a majority status, as anecdotal evidence currently suggests.

Definition of the in-group in populism. We argue that opinion majority claims, as an additional feature of populist communication, contribute to this perceptual bias. In general, an in-group's self-understanding is promoted by prototypical in-group members (Hogg & Reid, 2006; Mols, 2012; Reicher & Hopkins, 1996). To populism, these are the "charismatic leaders" (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008, p. 5). In their reference to the people, they spread an understanding of the people as being virtuous and homogeneous. This claim to people-centrism has been identified as a fundamental element of populist communication (Bos, van der Brug, & de Vreese, 2010; Reinemann et al., 2017; Rooduijn, 2014; Wirth et al., 2016).

However, the populist narrative is not limited to this message alone. The populist actor further defines the people as a "silent majority" (cf. Taggart, 2000, p. 92) whose opinions are not heard but suppressed by the ruling political elite. We argue that these majority cues to a more fine-grained self-understanding of the people are easily internalized by those who have identified as in-group members of the people. This argument is supported by the notion that individuals "learn their biases" from role models (Wilder, 1986, p. 292). Indeed, the identification with a group increases the persuasiveness of attitudes or group norms promoted by in-group leaders. A reason for this is the individual motivation to accord behavior and attitudes with those of other, especially prototypical, in-group members through the process of depersonalization (Hogg & Reid, 2006). Therefore, if a person self-categorizes as a member of the people, he or she should be more likely to adopt populist opinion majority claims and accordingly believe in the numerical superiority of the own group.

False consensus as a response to in-group threat. In general, research has shown that individuals very quickly overrate congruency of their own opinions with a majority (see research on false consensus, for example, Ross et al., 1977; projection hypothesis, for example, Holmes, 1968; looking glass perception, for example, Fields & Schuman, 1976). This distortion has a functional value for the individual in that humans generally like to be right (Festinger, 1954). Certainty regarding the correctness of one's own attitudes increases when they are seen to be shared by others (Holtz & Miller, 1985). False consensus is therefore a means by which "one can be reassured of the normality and appropriateness of one's positions" (Hoorens, 1993, p. 130).

While humans generally tend to believe that others share their views, different circumstances have been identified under which this bias is even more likely to occur. For example, false consensus perceptions are elicited by attitude strength (Wojcieszak & Price, 2009) or by low perceived in-group status. Regarding the latter, members of groups with minority status regard themselves as being in the unbearable position of their opinions being under attack by stronger out-groups. In this situation, false consensus helps members of low-status groups to self-enhance: it fosters the feeling of in-group strength and allows group members to understand themselves as part of a cohesive social whole (see also in-group homogeneity effect; Kelly, 1989; Lee & Ottati, 1995). As a consequence, opinions held by the own group appear more powerful to in-group members (Spears, van der Pligt, & Eiser, 1985). Finally, individuals who are part of minority groups also tend to overestimate consensus for their position out of a need for social support, while those with majority positions rather underestimate consensus (Marks & Miller, 1987; Sanders & Mullen, 1983).

According to the populist narrative, the people is also a group under threat by the evil political elite in that it is constantly suppressed with no access to power. In comparison to the political elite, the people's group status is thus low on the dimension of power. Furthermore, many opinions held by populist actors and parties, for instance, those regarding issues such as migration or homosexuality, are often delegitimized as being immoral, reactionary, politically incorrect, or extreme by other actors in the public debate (Herkman, 2015; Koopmans & Muis, 2009; Taggart, 2002). Therefore,

there is no doubt that populist standpoints are under attack. Moreover, research on populist attitudes shows that populist citizens hold high levels of collective relative deprivation (Elchardus & Spruyt, 2016; Hameleers et al., 2017a). This feeling results from the perception of belonging to a group with low status. Against this background, individuals who have strongly internalized this vision of the people could be prone to projecting their own opinion onto others in order to strengthen their in-group's status and confirm their impression of having legitimate yet suppressed positions.

Accordingly, the in-group of the people fits a precondition of false consensus perceptions regarding the feeling of being under threat. Thus, in addition to the influence of populist majority claims, these psychological mechanisms also likely have the potential to explain false consensus perceptions by populist citizens. We thus formally hypothesize the following:

> **Hypothesis 1 (H1):** As a person's populist attitudes become stronger, he or she becomes more likely to perceive public opinion as congruent with his or her own standpoint.

You Are Fake News! Populist Attitudes and Hostile Media Perceptions

The relevant out-group to thin populism is the political elite, that is, the politicians currently running the government. Whether on national or supranational level, the political elite is blamed for all types of problems and—most of all—is blamed for depriving the people in that they ignore its will. However, depending on the specific form of populism, other societal actors with an elitist status are also construed as a burden to the people. For instance, intellectuals, administrations (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007), or, as predominant within left-wing populism, the wealthy (Wirz, 2018) are often defined to be accomplices of the establishment politicians. Another actor against whom populist actors vent their anger on is the mass media. Donald Trump's reproach to CNN, calling the outlet "fake news," can serve as a primary example of hostile media attitudes expressed by a populist actor (Jamieson, 2017). In the following, we will discuss how accusations such as these can contribute to a perception of the mass media as being an out-group to the people. Afterward, we will rely on research devoted to the hostile media effect and discuss how these elite cues on media bias may facilitate self-categorization processes that further pave the way toward hostile media perceptions.

Definition of the out-group in populism. The attribution of blame to elites is another core element of populist communication (Hameleers, Bos, & de Vreese, 2017b, 2017c). Judged from a self-categorization perspective, this delineation of out-groups is central to the definition of the in-group (Turner et al., 1987). Moreover, contrasts between in-group and out-groups are emphasized when out-groups are depersonalized and seen as homogeneous (Wilder, 1984). For populist communication to be successful, the creation of despicable out-groups is thus as important as the accentuation of appealing features of the in-group.

The mainstream media are not randomly chosen by the populist leader as an opponent to the people. Theoretical work on populism offers clear ideas on where the mainstream media stand within populisms' relational network. The mainstream media can be understood as a specific interpretation of the elite (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007) and specifically, as a conspiring agent of the established politicians (Mazzoleni, 2003). The media are blamed for biased reporting in favor of the political elite and are reproached for not fulfilling their democratic function as the Fourth Estate. This perspective on the media—in which they are considered a part of an elite conspiracy—has been coined "anti-media populism" (Krämer, 2018).

To the best of our knowledge, only two empirical studies to date investigate anti-media populism on the content level. In an analysis of Belgian political parties' broadcasts, Jagers and Walgrave (2007) showed that only the "all-out populist party" (p. 331) Vlaams Blok, led an anti-media discourse, whereas other parties did not engage in such criticism. Additionally, Holt (2016) recorded representatives from Swedish alternative media expressing the deep conviction that the mainstream media lie and have joined forces with the elite.

With messages of this type, populist actors declare the mainstream media to be a dangerous out-group to the people. Importantly, this declaration is all-encompassing, as it includes all mainstream media, not only particular outlets. The media as an institution form a group from which one must dissociate in order to keep one's own social identity positive. Audience members who self-categorize as members of the people should easily internalize this additional message and understand it as a view that is generally held by the in-group (cf. Hogg & Reid, 2006). Accordingly, citizens with populist attitudes should categorize the media in general as part of their out-group. This categorization can have significant effects on how content spread by these media is perceived. Research devoted to the hostile media effect describes and investigates precisely such mechanisms.

Hostile media perceptions as a response to in-group threat. According to this line of research, strong partisans tend to perceive media reports that address issues of personal importance as hostile (Vallone et al., 1985). A self-categorization explanation for this effect was introduced by Reid (2012), who showed that hostile media perceptions occur only if partisan identities are salient and when the message source belongs to the out-group. This effect is stronger as individuals' identification with the in-group becomes stronger (Arpan & Raney, 2003). In addition, low in-group status, especially if perceived as being illegitimate, was found to amplify hostile media perceptions (Hartmann & Tanis, 2013). Following this line of research, low status is already threatening per se, and accordingly, members of low-status groups are especially sensitive to any additional threat imposed, for example, by media coverage. Hostile media perceptions are also reinforced by individuals' belief in strong influences of media messages on others (Gunther & Storey, 2003). In the context of the hostile media effect, especially high-reach media are presumed to have the ability to shape public opinion in a direction that is favorable to the out-group, which would pose a clear threat to the status of the in-group (Hartmann & Tanis, 2013).

Taken together, there are at least four reasons why populist citizens likely show hostile media perceptions. First, anti-media rhetoric employed by populist actors declares the mainstream media to be an out-group to the people; this expression could serve as a cue to those who have internalized the populist ideology and turn them into highly skeptical consumers of mainstream news. Second, the populist identity could be made salient as soon as a news item is devoted to mainstream political affairs, independent of particular political issues, because populism is directed against the political establishment in general. Individuals with strong populist attitudes should thus react very sensitively to any news content that features established political actors. Third, the perceived low political status of populist citizens could further prompt their perceptions of the mass media in a hostile direction. Hostile media perceptions particularly result if the low in-group status is perceived to be illegitimate, which should be—as outlined above—the case among populist citizens. Fourth, the declared enemy of the people is high-reach media outlets what could increase the presumed influence of these media on others. The threat that these media pose should accordingly be perceived as quite momentous, and hence, hostile media perceptions should increase.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): As a person's populist attitudes strengthen, he or she becomes more likely to perceive the mainstream media's reporting as incongruent with his or her own standpoint.

The Gap Between Perceived Media Tone and Public Opinion

With the argument above, we postulate that as a person's populist attitudes strengthen that person will more strongly perceive public opinion to be congruent and the media to be incongruent with his or her own standpoint. In combination, both these predictions describe a gap between congruent public opinion perceptions and hostile media perceptions that should grow with increasing populist attitudes.

The general perceptual pattern described by this gap is in line with findings presented by a series of studies on individual media and public opinion perceptions. It was demonstrated several times that strong partisans show a strong positive relationship between their own opinion and perceived public opinion, which is explained by projection, as well as a strong negative relationship between their own opinion and perceived media opinion, which is explained by hostile media perceptions (e.g., Gunther & Chia, 2001; Gunther & Christen, 2002; Gunther, Christen, Liebhart, & Chia, 2001). In addition, these studies revealed a persuasive press inference, which describes the individual tendency to infer public opinion from the perceived media tone as a function of beliefs in media effects on others (Gunther, 1998). While the persuasive press inference did not disband the projection of one's own opinion onto public opinion, it offset projection at least to some extent (cf. Gunther & Christen, 2002).

As we suggest an increasing gap between perceived congruent public opinion on one hand and perceived incongruent media on the other, we also imply that the persuasive press inference might be weaker (if not completely neutralized) among

populist citizens. According to the social identity approach followed in this article, an explanation for this phenomenon could lie in populist citizens' conception of the people as an in-group. This in-group is, following the populist narrative, very homogeneous and positively charged, which could translate into exceptionally strong perceived communalities with the people among those that identify with this group. Correspondingly, research on presumed media effects on others has demonstrated a social distance corollary: as an individual perceives a group of others to be more similar to the self, this group will be perceived as less susceptible to media influences (cf. Duck, Hogg, & Terry, 1995; Reid & Hogg, 2005; for a meta-analysis, see Sun, Pan, & Shen, 2008). Moreover, populism sketches the people as a very intelligent group that acts according to common sense (Taggart, 2000). Thus, individuals who regard the people as their in-group should be motivated to believe in weak media effects on this group as a function of perceived similarities and because of the group's intelligence, which should protect the group from simply believing the disinformation spread by the manipulative enemy. For these reasons, the persuasive press inference mechanism is likely weaker for populist citizens, which should lead the gap between hostile media and congruent public opinion perceptions to widen rather than to shrink. We therefore assume the following:

Hypothesis 3 (H3): As a person's populist attitudes strengthen, the difference between perceptions of congruent public opinion and of a hostile media increases.

Finally, we would like to determine whether the proposed relations travel across borders—that is, if false consensus and hostile media perceptions can be connected to populist attitudes in different countries. This research question will be approached using cross-country comparisons between four metropolitan regions. Specifically, we will compare the relation of populist attitudes, media, and opinion perceptions in Berlin, Zurich, London, and Paris. If the social psychological mechanisms are at work as proposed above, populist citizens in the chosen regions will likely classify public opinion and the mass media in the same ways, particularly because populist communication was demonstrated to play an important and influential role in the mediated political discourse in these four countries (Müller et al., 2017).

Research Question 1 (RQ1): Do the proposed relationships between populist attitudes, public opinion perceptions, and media perceptions reflect general perceptual patterns that are employed by populist citizens in different countries?

Method

Data

This study is a secondary data analysis that relies mainly on the second wave of a two-wave panel survey fielded in April 2014 (first wave) and March 2015 (second wave). The survey was conducted by a market research institute, and respondents were

recruited from an online access panel following a quota procedure regarding sex and age. Data were gathered in four European cities and their surrounding rural areas: Berlin and Brandenburg, Germany ($N = 640$); Paris and Île-de-France, France ($N = 640$); Zurich and canton of Zurich, Switzerland ($N = 1{,}250$); and London and Buckinghamshire, United Kingdom ($N = 824$). Complete data were obtained for 3,354 participants. Completion rates for the first panel wave range between 87.5% (Paris) and 92.8% (Switzerland). Due to panel mortality, which ranged between 37% in Zurich and 60% in Paris, the empirical distributions of age and sex slightly deviate from population data (Berlin: $M_{age} = 45.9$, $SD = 13.1$, 55% female; Paris: $M_{age} = 47.7$, $SD = 13.1$, 61.9% female; Zurich: $M_{age} = 51.8$, $SD = 13.8$, 47.2% female; London: $M_{age} = 51.5$, $SD = 13.2$, 41.6% female). Thus, influences of age and sex were controlled for in all analyses.

Measures

Public opinion perceptions. Public opinion perceptions were measured via three items for which participants had to indicate how strongly they perceive their own opinion about a country's politics to be shared by others. Items did not focus on opinions toward a specific policy or person but asked for opinions regarding a country's politics in general. This approach was chosen because the populist ideology does not blame the political elite for a failure regarding a specific political issue but expresses a general criticism of all politics run by the political elite. Values ranged from 1 (*do not agree at all*) to 5 (*agree completely*). Thus, high scores indicate that a person believes public opinion to correspond to personal views regarding a country's politics in general, whereas a low score indicates the opposite. The items were sufficiently reliable (Cronbach's $\alpha = .84$), allowing for the computation of a mean index. This index was normally distributed in all four country subsets ($M_{Berlin} = 3.17$; $SD = 0.82$; $M_{Paris} = 3.18$; $SD = 0.89$; $M_{Zurich} = 2.99$; $SD = 0.79$; $M_{London} = 3.15$; $SD = 0.84$; see Tables A1 and A2 in the online appendix for a complete measurement report).

Media perceptions. The perceptions of the degree of congruency or incongruence between the mainstream media's reporting and one's own opinion was measured via four items ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The measurement was taken from Matthes (2012, see also Eveland & Shah, 2003; Hwang, Pan, & Sun, 2008) and adapted to the context of our study. Parallel to how the public opinion measurement was established, we asked for an overall evaluation of the media coverage regarding a country's politics and not regarding specific issues. Importantly, the measurement tapped for opinion hostile media perceptions including the ego-perspective, which enables us to directly detect whether our respondents feel that the media are on their side (i.e., support their own opinion) or not. The measures are thus very adequate for the social identity approach to populist attitudes and populist perceptions that we follow within this article. The four items were consistent to a satisfactory degree (Cronbach's $\alpha = .84$), and a mean index was computed. To simplify the interpretation of the results, we reversed the index so that high values yield a congruent media

perception (as high values on the public opinion perception measure also indicate opinion congruent perceptions) and low values indicate incongruent media perceptions ($M_{\text{Berlin}} = 2.64$; $SD = 0.89$; $M_{\text{Paris}} = 2.50$; $SD = 0.73$; $M_{\text{Zurich}} = 2.94$; $SD = 0.84$; $M_{\text{London}} = 2.57$; $SD = 0.79$; see Tables A1 and A2 in the online appendix for a complete measurement report).

Perceptual gap. To depict the perceptual gap between media perceptions and public opinion perceptions, we computed a third dependent variable as a difference score for public opinion perceptions and media perceptions. Media perception scores were subtracted from public opinion perception scores. As both original variables ranged from 1 to 5, values of the gap variable range from −4 to +4. A score of −4 occurs if a person perceives public opinion to strongly diverge from the personal view (score of 1 on the public opinion variable) and if that person simultaneously perceives the media to report very much in line with his or her personal view (score of 5 on the media perception variable). A score of +4 occurs if a person perceives public opinion to correspond to the personal view (score of 5 for the public opinion variable) and if that person simultaneously perceives the media to report very incongruently with his or her personal view (score of 1 for the media perception variable). In both cases, the difference in perceptions of the media and public opinion will be at its maximum. Coming from both ends of the scale, the perceptual gap decreases toward the scale midpoint of 0. A score of 0 indicates that a person does not perceive a difference between how media reporting leans and how public opinion leans with reference to his or her own opinion ($M_{\text{Berlin}} = 0.53$; $SD = 1.35$; $M_{\text{Paris}} = 0.69$; $SD = 1.25$; $M_{\text{Zurich}} = 0.05$; $SD = 1.2$; $M_{\text{London}} = 0.57$; $SD = 1.21$).

Populist attitudes. Populist attitudes were measured using a 12-item scale that was introduced by Schulz et al. (2017). In sets of four items, the scale depicts three facets of populist attitudes: anti-establishment, popular sovereignty, and the homogeneity and virtuousness of the people. Survey participants rated all items using 5-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), which are reflected by a higher order factor of populist attitudes. The *z* scores of that higher order factor were used for the analyses (see Tables A1 and A2 in the online appendix for a complete measurement report).

Controls. We included political orientation, political extremity, political interest, age, sex, and education as controls in our analyses. In the countries under investigation, the strongest populist force comes from the right of the political spectrum, with the Alternative for Germany in Germany, the Front National in France, the Swiss People's Party in Switzerland and the UK Independence Party in Great Britain (van Kessel, 2015). We therefore expect right-wing political orientation, measured via a single item scaled from 1 (*left*) to 11 (*right*), to better relate to our outcome variables than left-wing political orientation. Furthermore, as research has shown that strong attitudes or involvement enhance false consensus (Wojcieszak & Price, 2009) and hostile media effects (Vallone et al., 1985), we included political extremity as a control to rule out

the possibility that relationships between populist attitudes and our dependent variables are due only to strong populist attitudes. To investigate the role of political extremity, we recoded the political orientation measure so that its outer ends now indicate political extremity (value 6), while its former midpoint now represents moderate political attitudes (value 1). Additionally, political interest could function as involvement and reinforce both hostile media perceptions and congruent public opinion perceptions. Hence, this variable, measured via a single item from 1 (*not at all interested*) to 5 (*very interested*) was also inserted. These controls, as well as age, sex, and education, were added to all models in order to assess the relative strength of the relationship between populist attitudes and the respective outcome variables and to control for bias due to samples that are not fully representative (see Table A2 in the online appendix for a complete measurement report and Table A3 for bivariate correlations between all variables).

Analyses

First, we conducted a principal axis factor analysis (PAF) to check whether populist attitudes can be empirically distinguished from public opinion and media perceptions. Second, we run three multigroup regression analyses using the 1.1-12 version of the lmr4-package for R, which can be used to fit linear mixed-effects models (Bates, Mächler, Bolker, & Walker, 2015). The three different outcome variables were regressed onto the same predictor variables within varying-intercept models (Gelman & Hill, 2009). Slopes were fixed to take into account that respondents are nested within different countries. To determine whether the proposed relations are equal in the regions under investigation, we freed the slopes for populist attitudes and compared this model to the varying-intercept model.

Results

Within a preparatory analysis 19 items (three on opinion perceptions, four on media perceptions, and 12 measuring populist attitudes) were entered into a PAF using the promax rotation method. The analysis clearly demonstrates that the relevant constructs are empirically distinct both across and within the separate regions (see Table A1 in the online appendix).

The first multigroup regression is run with public opinion perceptions as an outcome in order to test for H1. The results are summarized in Table 1. Populist attitudes are significantly—and in this case, positively—related to congruent public opinion perceptions ($\beta = .31$; $p < .001$). Accordingly, as a person holds stronger populist attitudes, that person will more strongly perceive public opinion to be in line with his or her own opinion. This result confirms H1. In addition, political orientation, education, and sex are found to significantly relate to public opinion perceptions. The results show that congruent public opinion perceptions are also explained by female sex ($\beta = -.05$; $p < .001$), low education ($\beta = -.07$; $p < .001$) and, to a comparably strong degree, by right-wing political orientation ($\beta = .24$; $p < .001$). As a person leans more

Table 1. Fixed and Random Effects for Media Perceptions, Opinion Perceptions, and the Gap Variable.

	Media perceptions				Opinion perceptions				Gap				Gap			
	β	*b*	*SE*	*t*	β	*b*	*SE*	*t*	β	*b*	*SE*	*t*	β	*b*	*SE*	*t*
Fixed effects																
Intercept	**−.05**	2.98	.13	22.64	**.03**	2.81	.10	28.48	.06	−0.18	.19	−0.92	.06	−0.17	.19	−0.88
Age	−.02	0.00	.00	−1.30	−.01	−0.00	.00	−0.46	.01	0.00	.00	0.64	.01	0.00	.00	0.63
Sex (male)	−.02	−0.03	.03	−0.94	**−.05**	−0.09	.03	−3.28	−.02	−0.06	.04	−1.59	−.02	−0.06	.04	−1.57
Education (high)	.00	−0.01	.03	−0.27	**−.07**	−0.12	.03	−4.50	**−.05**	−0.11	.04	−2.91	**−.04**	−0.11	.04	−2.89
Political Interest	**−.04**	−0.03	.01	−2.22	.03	0.02	.01	1.79	**.05**	0.06	.02	2.85	**.05**	0.05	.02	2.76
Political Orientation (right)	**−.04**	−0.01	.01	−2.35	**.24**	0.08	.01	15.17	**.18**	0.10	.01	12.18	**.18**	0.10	.01	12.14
Political Extremity	−.02	−0.01	.01	−1.49	−.01	−0.01	.01	−0.69	.01	0.01	.01	0.59	.01	0.01	.01	0.52
Populist Attitudes	**−.32**	−0.63	.03	−19.13	**.31**	0.62	.03	19.53	**.41**	1.26	.05	27.21	**.41**	1.25	.08	15.22
Random intercepts																
Berlin	−.10	2.95			.15	2.91			.17	−0.04			.17	−0.03		
Paris	−.25	2.82			.06	2.83			.21	0.01			.21	0.02		
Zurich	.30	3.28			−.16	2.65			−.31	−0.64			−.31	−0.63		
London	−.16	2.90			.08	2.85			.16	−0.05			.16	−0.04		
Random effects for populist attitudes																
Berlin													.51	1.37		
Paris													.31	1.12		
Zurich													.46	1.32		
London													.36	1.19		
R^2 adjusted			.17				.22				.30				.30	
AIC											10,072.95				10,073.48	

Note. $N = 3{,}354$ for all models; effects significant at $p < .05$ are in boldface. AIC = Akaike's information criterion.

strongly toward the political right that person will more strongly perceive public opinion to be congruent with his or her own opinion.

Our second hypothesis stated that populist citizens perceive the media reporting to be hostile toward their own opinion. Table 1 shows that this hypothesis is confirmed. We find a strong negative and significant relation between populist attitudes and media perceptions. That is, as a person holds stronger populist attitudes, that person will perceive the media to be less congruent ($\beta = -.32$; $p < .001$). Political interest ($\beta = -.04$; $p < .05$) and political orientation ($\beta = -.04$; $p < .05$) also proved to be significant predictors of media perceptions.

Our final hypothesis investigated the gap variable, that is, the difference score between media perceptions and opinion perceptions as an outcome. The hypothesis said that the difference in perceiving the media as incongruent toward one's own standpoint and perceiving public opinion to be congruent to one's own standpoint is greatest for those with strong populist attitudes. The results are summarized in Table 1. This hypothesis is also confirmed, with populist attitudes being the strongest predictor for the gap variable ($\beta = .41$; $p < .001$). As a person more strongly supports populist ideas, his or her evaluations of media and public opinion will diverge more. Thus, to very populist citizens, these two entities are considered to be in strong opposition.[1] After populist attitudes, political orientation is again the second strongest predictor included in this analysis ($\beta = .18$; $p < .001$). Furthermore, low education ($\beta = -.05$; $p < .01$) and stronger political interest ($\beta = .05$; $p < .01$) are related to the gap as well.

For all three outcome variables, we find that populist attitudes are the strongest predictor.[2] As a person more strongly supports populist ideas, he or she more strongly perceives the media's reporting as hostile toward his or her personal standpoint and more strongly perceives the public opinion to be in line with his or her own standpoint. Following populist attitudes, right-wing political orientation holds the next greatest share of explained variance for media perceptions, public opinion perceptions, and the gap. This can be connected to the dominance of right-wing populist forces in the regions under investigation (van Kessel, 2015). However, it is remarkable that populist attitudes, which represent only the core of the populist ideology and depict no tendency toward either the political left or the political right, explain the greatest share of variance in public opinion and media perceptions. To ascertain whether the observed relationships are not caused merely by populist citizens' strong attitudes, political extremity was included as a control. Yet, political extremity did not relate to any of the three outcome variables (Table 1).[3]

Finally, we freed the slopes for populist attitudes in the model that uses the gap variable as an outcome to determine whether the detected perceptual patterns are equal in all four regions under investigation (RQ1). The results show that random effects for populist attitudes are very similar in strength and range between 1.12 in Paris and 1.37 in Berlin. Thus, populist attitudes remain the strongest predictor for the gap variable in all four country samples. The comparison of the varying-intercept model with the varying-intercept varying-slope model via Akaike's information criterion reveals no notable changes (Table 1).[4] Hence, we find the detected populist perceptual patterns are parallel in the four regions.

Discussion

Across Europe, populist parties are gaining influence. Their supporters have filled the streets and online comment forums, claiming to hold majority status and behaving in a hostile fashion—in words and actions—toward politicians and the media. So far, no studies have investigated whether these observations are systematic, that is, whether anti-media attitudes and opinion majority beliefs can be empirically linked to populist attitudes. This study set out to provide an extensive theoretical framework and empirical evidence of a relationship between populist attitudes, false consensus and hostile media perceptions in four countries.

We find clear systematic patterns. First, as a person's populist attitudes strengthen, he or she is more likely to sense a similarity between his or her own opinion and public opinion. Second, a person's perceptions of the media turn increasingly hostile as his or her populist attitudes strengthen. Moreover, the difference in perceiving public opinion to be congruent with one's own standpoint and perceiving the media to be hostile increases with increasing populist attitudes. This pattern was demonstrated in all four country samples.

These results and the social identity framework for populist attitudes developed in this article can help us to better understand populist citizens and the social dynamics connected to populism and populist communication. As noted by Rooduijn (2017), the extant literature on populist attitudes lacks evidence about commonalities among populist citizens since most studies have been set in single countries and have focused on either left- or right-wing populist attitudes. By applying a measurement for populist attitudes that traces support to the thin ideology of populism and that links this measure to media and public opinion perceptions in four countries, we demonstrated that hostile media perceptions and false consensus perceptions are unifying characteristics of populist citizens. These perceptions are potentially driven by social identity mechanisms, as suggested by our theoretical analysis.

Additionally, our findings contribute to basic communication research. As shown by our analysis, the persuasive press inference mechanism seems to be annulled if hostile media perceptions and congruent public opinion perceptions are each driven by populist attitudes. We argued that this finding might be connected to the fact that the people, who constitute public opinion, are conceived of as the in-group by populist citizens and the in-group is seen as less susceptible to media messages (cf. Reid & Hogg, 2005). However, this finding does not imply that populist citizens do not generally make persuasive press inferences. Conversely, populist citizens might well infer opinions of others from perceived mediated opinions, but only if those others are not the people (i.e., the in-group). Clearly, further research is needed to learn more about populist citizens' beliefs in media effects on others.

Limitations and Future Research

Naturally, this study has limitations, and the findings must be read in light of these shortcomings. First, the social identity mechanisms that were proposed to underlie the

observed relations were not tested in this study. Future research should gather empirical information about populist communication that refers to the people as the majority or to the media as agents of the political elite. Media effects studies should test how such messages affect citizens' public opinion and media perceptions through the process of in-group identification. As long as these avenues are not pursued, the social identity approach to populist attitudes and its consequences as outlined herein will remain only a possible explanation for the identified perceptual patterns. Furthermore, for this exploration, we had to rely on cross-sectional data and no question of causality can hence be approached. Future research will have to follow up on the ideas presented in this article with either longitudinal or experimental designs in order to detect eventual causalities between populist attitudes, hostile media and false consensus perceptions, as well as the relationships between these factors and their assumed predictors: exposure to populist communication and identification with the people.

Moreover, clarification is needed regarding the psychological foundations of demand-side populism. Within this article, we have inter alia referred to this as a mental map or worldview without fully resolving what these concepts are psychologically. We assume that—in the broadest sense—the populist worldview serves as a cognitive and affective framework that influences how incoming information about different societal entities is processed. This study has identified hostile media perceptions and opinion majority beliefs as elements of this worldview, however, further conceptual efforts are needed to carve out the concepts specificities and borders.

Further limitations concern our sample. The survey was run in four Western European regions. In all these countries, populism is strongly linked to the political right. The observed patterns should therefore also be investigated in countries where the dominant populist force comes from the political left. If the concept of thin populism has empirical value, populist citizens should show the same perceptual patterns, regardless of the political context in which they live. The fact that the proposed relationships were found to be similar in all four country samples while controlling for political orientation can be interpreted as a first indicator of their general significance. It also has to be acknowledged that the sample is not fully representative. Respondents were recruited from online access panels, preventing those who do not have Internet access from participating. Moreover, we used data from the second wave of a panel survey, and dropouts from the first wave are likely systematic. However, we found the distributions of age and sex to remain close to population data, and we controlled for them and other relevant variables in all the analyses. At last, we have data from four metropolitan areas rather than national data. While we can argue that respondents' backgrounds are diverse because we have surveyed both city districts and surrounding rural districts, metropolitan areas should not be regarded as petri dishes for nation states. Rather, we can assume that polarization crystallizes in these regions. It should be recognized that the relations discovered herein might differ in contexts characterized by consensus rather than polarization.

Finally, we did not focus on citizens with low populist attitudes. However, our findings should motivate future research to investigate this group as well. Most intriguing might be the question of whether the mediated populist schema also triggers self-categorization processes among non-populist citizens. It could be possible that these

citizens also start to employ the "us versus them" frame and view those who support populism as members of an out-group. This thought is supported by Müller et al. (2017), who found reactance effects among non-populist citizens when their media diet was saturated with populist messages. That populist supporters are often stigmatized as angry and uneducated can count as anecdotal evidence for out-group hostility following self-categorization as a non-populist citizen.

Conclusion

Despite its limitations, the present study contributes to an improved understanding of populist citizens in three ways. First, this study is the first to demonstrate a systematic link between populist attitudes, congruent public opinion perceptions, hostile media perceptions, and the distance between the two latter. Populist attitudes proved to be the strongest predictor compared with a series of control variables, such as political orientation or political extremity. Second, these perceptual patterns were found in four metropolitan areas, which indicates that they are not linked to a country-specific discourse but might rather be part of a general populist attitude syndrome. Third, the article introduced a social identity approach to populist attitudes, which proved to be a useful explanatory framework for populist citizens' false consensus and hostile media perceptions.

Overall, we described a dangerous interplay between citizens' identification to the in-group of the people and their respective responses to populist claims and mechanisms, as described by research on false consensus and hostile media effects. The societal consequences of these biased perceptions still deserve discussion and further investigation. The populist mistrust in the mainstream news media in terms of the ability to report fairly and accurately about politics is likely followed by a turn toward alternative media (Downey & Fenton, 2003; Tsfati & Peri, 2006) and a growing distrust in democracy as a whole (Tsfati & Cohen, 2005). Importantly, whereas media skepticism has always been linked to reporting about specific issues or conflicts, it has become a general accusation among populist citizens. Accordingly, political arguments for different positions will hardly be listened to by populist citizens, which may challenge an inclusive democratic discourse (cf. Sunstein, 2002).

The false consensus that was demonstrated among populist citizens likely leads these individuals to overestimate their status in society. This can have great value for minorities, who can increase their influence via this mechanism (cf. van Avermaet, Mugny, & Moscovici, 1985). By projecting their own opinion onto others, populist citizens gain the impression of large social support for their opinions, which also lends reassurance regarding their position's appropriateness. One of the most important sources that could correct this belief—the mass media—is disqualified as a lying agent of the disdained political elite.

Given the growing success of populist parties in almost all modern democracies combined with outrage against political and media elites, further research in this domain is highly important. More specifically, the dynamics of a potentially reinforcing spiral between populist attitudes, false consensus and hostile media

perceptions should be explored in more detail. A deeper analysis will enable researchers and practitioners in the domains of media and politics to develop a better understanding of how populist citizens make sense of the world. Ultimately, this insight should help to develop measures that prevent further societal polarization in populist and anti-populist camps.

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Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Notes

1. The results presented so far point to the question of whether populist citizens still infer public opinion from their perceived media tone perceptions, as presumed by research on the persuasive press inference (cf. Gunther & Chia, 2001). If social identity mechanisms drive hostile media tone perceptions and congruent public opinion perceptions, then maybe, the persuasive press inference is switched off among populist citizens. In order to offer a test for this particular question, we run a mediation analysis. The analysis confirms the results of Hypotheses 1 and 2 and shows no significant relation between media perceptions and public opinion perceptions. This finding indicates that indeed, populist citizens do not seem to make persuasive press inferences (see Online Appendix Table A4 for detailed results).
2. This remains true if we use indicators for populist attitudes that no longer contain the dimension that is most conceptually similar to the respective outcome. For the first model, we omitted anti-elitist attitudes so that only the homogeneity and the popular sovereignty dimensions account for variance in media perceptions. For the second model, we excluded the homogeneity dimension so that only anti-establishment and popular sovereignty were linked to public opinion perceptions. In both cases, the results remain almost completely equal. Most importantly, the coefficients for populist attitudes remain by far the strongest by comparison.
3. To better evaluate the influence of political extremity, we run all models including political extremity but excluding populist attitudes. The results show that political extremity exerts

a significant influence on hostile media perceptions when populist attitudes are excluded ($b = -0.02$; $t(3354) = -2.28$; $p < .05$) but still political extremity does not relate to the other two outcome variables (see also the bivariate correlations in Table A3).

4. This is also the case for model comparisons of the other two models.

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Article III

Where populist citizens get the news: An investigation of news audience polarization along populist attitudes in 11 countries

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Where populist citizens get the news: An investigation of news audience polarization along populist attitudes in 11 countries

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a secondary analysis of two multi-national cross-sectional surveys conducted in 2015 (11 countries, $N = 10{,}570$) and 2017 (4 countries, $N = 2165$) to examine the relationship between populist attitudes and media use. The results indicate that populist citizens are more likely to consume news than non-populist citizens. Specifically, populist citizens exhibit a preference for commercial television (TV) news, as well as a tendency to read tabloid newspapers. While they use fewer quality newspapers, public TV news are not systematically avoided. Regarding the online news environment, populist citizens prefer Facebook over Twitter as a source of political information. This selective pattern will be discussed in light of the debates on news audience polarization and political polarization.

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Anti-media populism (Krämer, 2018) is emerging in Europe and the United States – a phenomenon that is reflected in populist politicians' politics but also in citizens' attitudes toward the media. To populist citizens in particular, a healthy form of media skepticism seems to have been replaced by a perception of the media as an element that is lying and working against the people (Schulz, Wirth & Müller, 2018). It is an open question, if these perceptions are related to news choice. Based on the research on selective exposure and media skepticism (cf. Stroud, 2008; Tsfati & Cappella, 2003), one could assume that populist citizens turn away from those news media, which they reproach to lie and to stand close to the political elite. This could be the case for public television (TV) news or quality newspapers (Mazzoleni, 2008). However, initial empirical efforts in the study of populist citizens' media use provide mixed evidence regarding this assumption. A study conducted in the Netherlands revealed that reading a quality newspaper is positively related to anti-establishment populist attitudes, whereas reading a tabloid newspaper is not (Hameleers, Bos, & Vreese, 2017a).

The current article extends prior work in that it provides an extensive investigation of media preferences of populist citizens across the United States and 10 European countries at different points in time (2015 and 2017). Relying on two large multi-national cross-sectional survey studies, populist citizens' exposure to news in general and specifically, to

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quality and tabloid newspapers, public and commercial TV news shows is investigated. Moreover, no analysis of populist citizens' online news use has thus far been undertaken. This study fills this research gap by examining the associations between populist attitudes and the use of different online news sources (e.g., social media). Importantly, both surveys incorporate exhaustive yet similar measures regarding exposure to news and populist attitudes. Thus, the data provide the unique opportunity to test and directly replicate a number of hypotheses regarding populist citizens' media use across countries at different points in time.

The present study contributes to two urgent societal and scholarly debates. One is about the consequences of today's high-choice media environment and whether or not the expansion in media choice may lead to audience polarization (Fletcher & Nielsen, 2017; Webster, 2005). The second is about the role of populism in today's societies. While for a long time, societies were ideologically categorized along a left-right or liberal-conservative dimension, a new cultural cleavage is discussed to have emerged between populists and cosmopolitan liberals (Inglehard & Norris, 2016; cf. Kriesi, 2010). Studies on demand side populism support this notion and provide evidence for the importance of populist attitudes to individual perceptions (e.g., Castanho Silva, Vegetti, & Littvay, 2017; Schulz et al., 2018) and political behavior (e.g., van Hauwaert & van Kessel, 2017). As it has hence become relevant where citizens stand on the populist attitude continuum, this attitude is potentially important to news use as well.

Populist attitudes and the polarization of news audiences

It has been observed for many years that populist parties are gaining ground in Europe and the United States. As the German, Austrian, and Czech national elections in 2017 have recently demonstrated, this process is not receding. Although populism is argued to have potential corrective functions, it severely challenges the effectiveness and persistence of liberal democracies (Waisbord, 2018). One of the most concerning threats posed by populist forces is based on their power to polarize societies (Müller et al., 2017). This polarization is rooted in the notion that populism is a political ideology that ultimately separates society into two homogeneous groups: the pure people and the evil political elite. The latter defrauds the former of nothing less but the power over decisions, that is, popular sovereignty (Mudde, 2004; Wirth et al., 2016).

Populist citizens are those who support the political vision expressed within this ideology (Schulz et al., 2017). In particular, populist citizens show anti-elitism attitudes and reproach the ruling political class to have, for example, lost contact to the people. While this attitude overlaps with political efficacy or political cynicism (cf. Bos, van der Brug, & Vreese, 2013), it is also unique in that it explicitly speaks to the antagonistic relationship between the people and the political elite. Further, populist citizens demand unrestricted popular sovereignty. In its extreme form, this implies to limit liberal democratic elements and/or minority rights to impose unrestrained majority rule. Finally, populist citizens also have a very specific perception of the people. In particular, they believe the people to be a homogeneous and virtuous group, a coherent entity that is honest, inherently good, and moreover, shares the same values and interests. With this information in mind, a very comprehensive definition of populism and populist attitudes in particular is offered here, which specifically excludes the political elite. Other theoretical

accounts to populism (e.g., Jagers & Walgrave, 2007) refer to additional groups that can be excluded, either on a vertical level (e.g., the rich or the media), or horizontally (e.g., immigrants).

Although much is known about populist citizens' political attitudes (Akkerman, Mudde, & Zaslove, 2014), public opinion perceptions (Schulz et al., 2018), psychological dispositions (Spruyt, Keppens, & van Droogenbroeck, 2016), and character (Bakker, Rooduijn, & Schumacher, 2016), research on their media use is still in its infancy. This is surprising when considering the prevailing and important debate on fragmented and polarized news audiences and the influence of online and alternative media not only on electoral outcomes but with respect to the integration of society as a whole (Fletcher & Nielsen, 2017; Katz, 1996; Nelson & Webster, 2017; Webster, 2005). For reasons to be discussed herein, populist citizens could show systematic preferences for some news media types over others. That is, some media types are expected to have strong populist audiences while the opposite is predicted for other news media types. More specifically, using a selective exposure framework it is argued below that populist citizens should show preferences for tabloid newspapers, commercial TV news as well as for digital born news and Facebook. Further, avoidance tendencies are expected for quality newspapers and public TV news as those are increasingly attacked by populist actors as lying agents of the political establishment. A pattern like this would indicate polarized news audiences on the level of media types. Before looking into the use of these specific news media types, the article investigates news avoidance by populist citizens.

News avoidance

News avoidance and its possible polarizing consequences are identified to be among the major challenges to democracy that arise in times of high-choice media environments (van Aelst et al., 2017). Where the overall amount of mediated content strongly increases but the share of political information decreases, the complete abstention from any type of political information becomes easier (Aalberg, Blekesaune, & Elvestad, 2013; Prior, 2007). For individuals to resist distracting content, political interest becomes a key motivation for news exposure. Hence, when political interest is low, it is even less likely that individuals will seek political information (Strömbäck, Djerf-Pierre, & Shehata, 2013). If populist citizens are by and large not interested in politics, they could also be among the news-avoiders. However, studies exploring the relation between populist attitudes and political interest are surprisingly rare and provide mixed evidence (e.g., Rooduijn, 2017; Spruyt et al., 2016).

Possibly, populist attitudes are comprised of beliefs and sentiments that stand in altering relation to political interest. On one hand, the populist demand for unrestricted popular sovereignty, a form of democracy that is based on participation, as well as the pronounced attitudes regarding the political elite could increase the attentiveness to everything related to the (wrong) doings of the established politics and thus also general news exposure. This is consistent with the research on political cynicism, where it was determined that cynics do not turn away from news, but rather, are found to be associated with more news exposure compared to less cynical individuals (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997).

On the other hand, however, populist citizens are also characterized as a group that is "reluctantly political" (Mudde, 2004, 547f.), that is, a group that must be mobilized rather than one where members take their own initiatives. Indeed, populist attitudes are related to feelings of anomia and a lack of political efficacy (Spruyt et al., 2016), all of which involves a certain degree of alienation from politics. From this, a disinterest in politics as well as a general avoidance of information about politics could emerge. This avoidance tendency could be reinforced by the frequent reproaches against the mass media voiced by populist actors who claim, inter alia, that media are in an alliance with the political elite against the people (Krämer, 2018). If this is internalized by populist citizens, they might turn away from mainstream news because they are no longer trusted. If, besides, alternative information sources are not accessible, generally lower news exposure rates for populist citizens could result. Against the theoretical background presented above, it is difficult to derive a hypothesis on populist citizens' general news exposure. Hence, a research question is investigated:

RQ1. To what extent is news avoidance associated with populist attitudes?

Preference for tabloid newspapers and commercial TV news

Though it is difficult to make assumptions about populist citizens general news exposure, assumptions about populist citizens' preferences for certain types of news are well founded. In general, these ideas follow the reasoning that individuals select content that aligns with their own beliefs, worldviews and expectations to avoid or reduce cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957; Stroud, 2008).

Populist citizens are said to prefer entertainment or soft news media, such as predominantly found in tabloid newspapers or commercial TV news (Reinemann, Stanyer, & Scherr, 2016) over other types of news sources (e.g., quality newspapers) as the former are generally better at speaking to the populist worldview and thus might appeal more to those who share it (Mazzoleni, 2003). For example, while quality or hard news outlets are envisioned as closely representing the established elites, the soft news media are assumed to do the opposite. As such, soft news media declare themselves to be the mouthpiece of the people and thus engage in strong criticism regarding established party politics (Hameleers, Bos, & Vreese, 2017b). In doing so, these media align with the beliefs of those who favor the populist ideas. Moreover, soft news media are argued and found to represent the societal order of us versus them, which is a core idea of populism (Klein, 1998; Krämer, 2014). Populist citizens who have internalized this worldview likely receive reports that build on this antagonism to be agreeable and easily adaptable to their own views and, subsequently, they should be attracted to this respective media type (Hameleers et al., 2017a). Another and more subtle populist appeal within soft news is created by the strong market orientation of respective outlets. To gain readership, content is produced to suit the tastes of the mass market (Mazzoleni, 2003). These types of media are, therefore, receptive to the scandals, emotions, dramatization, and inflammatory rhetoric that are styles typically employed by populist politicians (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008; Bos et al., 2013). Accordingly, populist politics find a reliable and profitable stage in the mass market media (Mudde, 2004). Following selective exposure logics, populist citizens likely select those media in which their preferred

politicians, as well as the issues and positions they as citizens hold, are frequently represented.

Only two studies have investigated the link between populist attitudes and exposure to soft news outlets. One study found that voters of populist parties watch more soft news programs in comparison to voters of non-populist parties (Bos, Kruikemeier, & Vreese, 2014). While the second study did not find a link between anti-establishment populist attitudes and tabloid exposure, it did identify a link between the attitudes and preferences for entertainment and populist media content (Hameleers et al., 2017a). The present study examines these links by way of a comparative analysis. As, according to theoretical accounts, tabloid newspapers and commercial TV news are those who most dominantly promote people centrism (Mazzoleni, 2008) and as these media types are further found to frequently employ different soft news dimensions (Reinemann et al., 2016), the following hypotheses are posited:

H1a. Populist attitudes are positively associated with tabloid newspaper use.

H1b. Populist attitudes are positively associated with commercial TV news use.

Avoidance of quality newspapers and public TV news

The same causes that could prompt populist citizens toward soft news outlets could also result in an objection to hard news providers, such as quality newspapers and public TV news (cf. Reinemann et al., 2016). Most importantly, these hard news media are associated much more than other media with the political establishment (Mazzoleni, 2008).

It is argued that the internalization of the populist worldview in addition to populist communication attacking the media leads individuals to categorize these quality media types as belonging to the evil elitist out-group (Schulz et al., 2018). In fact, it was recently determined that this perception is indeed present at the individual level (Palmer, 2017). These beliefs about the quality media extend far beyond the critical approach to information that should guide news consumption according to normative standpoints (cf. Austin & Pinkleton, 1999). Rather, hard news media are sweepingly accused of biased and intentional false reporting despite the observation that these news outlets include high degrees of elite criticism (Akkerman, 2011). As it has been previously concluded that higher levels of media skepticism negatively relate to mainstream news exposure (Tsfati & Cappella, 2003), the much stronger disapproval of public service news media and quality newspapers demonstrated by populist citizens could produce a comparable or even more pronounced reaction. Stated more directly, if quality newspapers and public TV news shows are the declared enemy of all those who support populism, contact should be prohibited. Thus, it is posited that:

H2a. Populist attitudes are negatively associated with quality newspaper use.

H2b. Populist attitudes are negatively associated with public TV news use.

Exposure to online news sources

A third set of hypotheses investigates populist citizens' engagement with news sources that can only be accessed online. These sources are often referred to as alternative media

(Atton, 2006). Given the high distrust that populist citizens hold regarding the mainstream news media, it is conceivable that they, more than others, turn to alternative news sources (Tsfati & Cappella, 2003). While alternative media also exist offline, the online environment offers a particularly wide variety of easily accessible news providers from which populist citizens can profit in the very sense of selective exposure. Among these online alternatives are social media platforms, political blogs, websites of parties, and digital born news. As the urge to approach attitude-congruent content is remarkably strong (Stroud, 2008) it is proposed that:

H3. Populist attitudes are positively associated with the likelihood of only using digitally born news outlets.

Among all the online sources that offer political information, social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are of particular interest to researchers of populism (Esser, Stępińska, & Hopmann, 2017). While all political parties develop and disclose social media strategies, populist politicians especially rely on the media that offer an unfiltered link to the electorate (Moffitt, 2016). However, as recent research has revealed, populist politicians use different platforms to differing degrees to spread their ideologies. Specifically, populist communication is found to be more dominant on Facebook than on Twitter (Ernst, Engesser, Büchel, Blassnig, & Esser, 2017). Assuming that populist citizens prefer outlets that strongly and frequently represent their own positions, it is posited that:

H3a. Populist attitudes are positively associated with using Facebook for political information.

H3b. Populist attitudes are negatively associated with using Twitter for political information.

Patterns of populist media use across countries

The populist moment is prevalent in almost all Western Democracies and is omnipresent in all national and international public debates. Likewise, the transition from low-choice to high-choice media environments affects about all media systems. It is hence plausible to expect similar links between populist attitudes and media choice across countries. Consequently, the final aim of this research article is to examine the associations between populist attitudes and media use predicted above across countries.

RQ2. Are the proposed relationships between populist attitudes and media use robust across different countries?

Overview of studies

Two multi-national cross-sectional surveys provide ample data to investigate the hypotheses. The surveys were administered online in 2015 (Study I) and 2017 (Study II) and cover some of the same countries. Both surveys tapped for exposure to news in widely comparable ways. Thus, Study II serves as a conceptual replication of Study I for most of the hypotheses. Only the hypotheses regarding populist citizens' online news use are dependent on Study II because Study I did not provide the necessary measures.

Study I

Data

The first survey was conducted in May 2015 and gathered data from 11 countries: Austria, Bulgaria, France, Germany, United Kingdom, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland (German and the French speaking part), and the United States. Respondents were recruited via email invitation by an ISO-certified market research institute and received a 0.50 Euro incentive for every 10 minutes of successful participation. A quota procedure with respect to age, sex, and education was applied. This procedure resulted in 1000 respondents per country. Twenty-seven percent of those invited successfully completed the interview with response rates ranging from 7% in the United States to 53% in Austria. The average length of interview was 20 minutes. Cases were excluded in the event of missing data for predictor variables. As a result, 447 cases were deleted, leaving 10,570 cases for the analyses. Detailed sample characteristics are reported in Table A12 in the online appendix.

The country selection offers insights into populist news media use in eastern, northern, southern, and western European countries and the United States. Whereas the countries vary with regard to their media and political systems, they also share many similarities. Importantly, all countries provide access to a variety of tabloid and quality newspapers, as well as an offer of different public and commercial TV news shows. Furthermore, populist parties and/or movements of different political color find support in all countries (van Kessel, 2015).

Measures

Exposure to news

News exposure was measured using an extended version of the list-frequency technique (Andersen, Vreese, & Albaek, 2016). Principally, news media exposure was tapped in three stages: the media-stage, the list-stage, and the frequency-stage. During the media-stage respondents could choose between one and five different media via which they received political information during a week. The options included TV, printed newspapers, radio, Facebook and/or Twitter, and news online. The first three items referred to news exposure via the non-digital ways (i.e., TV set or printed newspaper). Access to traditional news media via websites or apps was categorized as online news in this survey. Only those respondents who chose TV and/or printed newspapers were filtered to stage two of the exposure measure, the list-stage. Thus, it is important to keep in mind that the use of different media types refers only to the use of these types via the non-digital way whereas digital access possibilities are disregarded. This was handled differently in Study II.

In the list-stage, country-specific lists of TV and newspaper outlets were offered. The outlet lists were presented on separate survey pages depending on the media type they referenced, that is, TV or newspaper. Respondents were asked to select all news outlets that they used at least once a week. The third stage, the frequency-stage, presented all prior selected outlets and asked how often respondents accessed these news outlets over the course of a week. The response alternatives ranged on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*1 day per week*) to 7 (*7 days per week*). The exact question and item wording as well as country and survey specific lists of news outlets are reported in Table A8 online.

To compute the dependent variables, the news exposure measure was recoded decisively. To measure news avoidance, the media-stage variables were transformed into a binary variable. Those who did not chose a single medium, news avoiders, were assigned the value of 1 ($N = 292$). If at least one medium was selected, a value of 0 was assigned ($N = 10{,}278$).

Exposure to the different news media types was measured with variables from the list and frequency stages of the exposure measure. In a first step, the outlets that were presented in the list-stage were categorized as belonging to one of four categories, namely, tabloid press (also enclosed free and commuter press), quality press, public TV news, and commercial TV news. The categorization of TV news outlets was guided via channel ownership, that is, public or private. The categorization of newspapers as either tabloid or quality was pursued with the help of international experts who were queried to verify and/or discuss the categorization prepared by the author (see Table A9 online for outlet categorization).

In a second step, open answers that were added to the bottom of each outlet list were recoded as belonging to one of the four media types. As the amount of data was substantial, this was only conducted for respondents who did not select any outlet from the prepared lists and only used the open answer field to identify their news diet ($N = 834$). The majority of open replies referred to high-reach media from foreign countries.

Finally, the media type exposure variables were computed. Out of the many options to compute these variables, two different approaches were chosen to add robustness to the analyses. The first media type exposure variable carried information about the sum of selected outlets on the list-stage. This resulted in four count variables: public TV sum (ranged from 0 to 9), private TV sum (ranged from 0 to 10), quality newspaper sum (ranged from 0 to 10), and tabloid newspaper sum (ranged from 0 to 7). For example, if someone watched BBC News at Six and BBC News at Ten, a score of 2 on the public TV sum variable was assigned.

The second media type exposure variable relied on the frequency-stage variables and contained information about the mean frequency of contact with the respective media type per week. This resulted in another four dependent variables: public TV frequency ($M = 2.51$, $SD = 2.41$), private TV frequency ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 2.48$), quality newspaper frequency ($M = 1.35$, $SD = 2.03$), and tabloid newspaper frequency ($M = 1.37$, $SD = 2.13$, $N = 10{,}570$).

Importantly, cases that were filtered out during the media-stage of the exposure measure for not having chosen TV or printed newspapers as a means to obtain political information were assigned the value 0 on all eight media type exposure variables. Accordingly, all analyses were based on the complete dataset, and results and interpretations refer to the whole sample and are not limited to those individuals who watch TV and/or read newspapers.

Populist attitudes

Populist attitudes were measured using a 12-item inventory that was based on a hierarchical three-dimensional conceptualization of populist attitudes where four items were used to measure each dimension (Schulz et al., 2017). The first dimension captured attitudes toward the political elite and the second dimension assessed the individual's demand for popular sovereignty. Items of both, first and second dimension also refer to the

antagonism between the people and the political elite. The third dimension measures the perception of a homogeneous and virtuous people. These latent dimensions were reflected by a higher order factor of populist attitudes whereby the factor scores of the higher order factor were used as a predictor within the regression analyses. The reliability of the 12 items was very good with a Cronbach's alpha of .86 (see Table A14 online for a measurement report).

Controls

A series of psychological, political, media related, and sociological control variables were included in the attempt to demonstrate unique relationships between populist attitudes and media use. Political interest has been positively linked to exposure to all types of media (Strömbäck & Shehata, 2010) and has, in high-choice media environments, become one of the key motivations for seeking news sources (Strömbäck et al., 2013). Need for cognition was included as the desire to think was shown to positively relate to media use (Tsfati & Cappella, 2005). Political orientation has been found to be a major driver of selective exposure to news media (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009). However, as news outlets were not categorized regarding their political leanings but rather, regarding what news media type they belonged to, political orientation is not expected to correlate with the dependent variables. Albeit, it is included as a control to isolate the explanatory power of populist attitudes from the left- or right-political leanings of the respondents. For similar reasons, media skepticism is included as a fourth control. Because populist citizens hold negative attitudes toward the media (Schulz et al., 2018) and as media skepticism is confirmed to guide media use (Tsfati & Peri, 2006), it is important to separate out its influence on the dependent variables to identify the unique influence of populist attitudes. By so doing, the logic usually presented within selective exposure research is followed, that is, that political attitudes, and not attitudes toward the media themselves, are related to media use. Importantly, this article relies on a very concise definition of populism, which does not regard the media as a constituent of the elite. In addition sociodemographic variables, namely age, sex, and education, were included in all models (see Table A14 online for a measurement report).

Analyses

Depending on the specificities of the dependent variables, different types of regression methods were employed. Among these methods were logistic regressions (news avoidance), zero-inflated poisson regressions (sum of selected outlets per news media type), and linear regressions (mean frequency of use per news media type). H1a to H2b were each tested twice as two different operationalizations for the use of each news media type were available. To account for the fact that respondents are nested within countries, all analyses contained fixed-effects components. To test for the robustness of effects across countries, mixed-effects models were compared to the fixed-effects models. The analyses were run in R 3.3.1 using the package lme4, version 1.1-17 (Bates, Mächler, Bolker, & Walker, 2015) and the package glmmTMB, version 0.2.1.0 (Brooks et al., 2017).

Results

Research question one asked the extent to which news avoidance is associated with populist attitudes. The results of a fixed-effects logistic regression model showed that populist attitudes were significantly and negatively associated with news avoidance, suggesting that populist citizens were more likely to use news than their non-populist counterparts ($b = -0.32$, $p < .05$; Table 1). To learn more about this association, an additional analysis was computed. The dependent variable was transformed to no longer contain individual TV news use. As a result, the association between populist attitudes and news avoidance became non-significant ($b = -0.01$, *ns*; Table A1 online). Taken together, a correlation was found between stronger populist attitudes and news exposure in general, but this relationship was shown to be primarily driven by a heavy TV news consumption.

The first set of hypotheses posited that people with higher populist attitudes would exhibit stronger tabloid newspaper and commercial TV news use (H1a and H1b). Fixed-effects regression analyses confirmed these assumptions. Populist citizens were more likely to read tabloid newspapers and watch commercial TV news compared to non-populist citizens. This finding held with respect to the mean frequency of their use during a week (tabloid newspapers: $b = 0.24$, $p < .001$; commercial TV news: $b = 0.44$, $p < .001$; Table 1) and the sum of outlets selected (tabloid newspapers: $b = 0.14$, $p < .001$; commercial TV news: $b = 0.14$, $p < .001$; Table A2 online).

H2a and H2b predicted that high populist attitudes are related to less exposure to news media types that most often provide hard news, such as quality newspapers and public TV news. The results fully confirmed H2a. The stronger the populist attitudes were, the lower was the frequency of contact with quality newspapers during the week ($b = -0.13$, $p < .01$; Table 1) and the lower was the number of quality newspapers the individual read ($b = -0.11$, $p < .001$; Table A2 online). H2b, which assumed a decrease of public TV news use with increasing populist attitudes, was not supported. There was not a significant association between populist attitudes and exposure to public TV news shows, neither regarding the frequency of contact ($b = 0.06$, *ns*; Table 1) nor the sum of used outlets ($b = -0.04$, *ns*; Table A2 online). Hence, populist citizens had a smaller quality newspaper diet than non-populist citizens. However, they did not avoid public TV news. Rather, they watched public TV news with the same intensity as non-populist citizens.[1]

To test for the robustness of effects across countries (RQ2), random-effects were computed for populist attitudes. The resulting models' quality was compared to the quality of their counterparts with fixed-effects using the models' Bayesien Information Criterion (BIC). The model with the smaller BIC is to be preferred (Gelman & Hill, 2009). This comparison revealed that, all but in one case, the BIC of the fixed-effect models was smaller compared to the BIC of the random-effects models. This finding indicates that the fixed-effects models better fit the data and that hence, results can be interpreted as robust across countries.

The only exception was found with regard to the models predicting the frequency of tabloid newspaper use. The respective fixed-effect model had a BIC of 44,573 compared to a BIC of 44,540 found for the random-effects model. This indicates that the relationship between populist attitudes and the frequency of tabloid newspaper use varies across countries. Indeed, detailed analysis of country specific (random) effects revealed interesting country differences. Random effects for populist attitudes were in some countries

Table 1. Fixed effects logistic and linear regressions predicting news avoidance and the mean frequency of news media genres use (Study I).

	News avoidance			Public TV news			Commercial TV news			Quality newspapers			Tabloid newspapers		
	b	*SE*	*z*	*b*	*SE*	*t*	*b*	*SE*	*t*	*b*	*SE*	*t*	*b*	*SE*	*t*
Fixed effects															
Intercept	0.53	0.48	1.10	−0.89	0.27	−3.25**	1.01	0.33	3.01**	−1.06	0.23	−4.68***	0.03	0.26	0.10
Sex (female)	0.18	0.13	1.44	−0.14	0.04	−3.40***	0.26	0.04	5.83***	−0.04	0.04	−1.01	−0.02	0.04	−0.61
Age	−0.03	0.00	−6.45***	0.05	0.00	33.40***	0.02	0.00	17.20***	0.01	0.00	11.91***	0.01	0.00	6.00***
Education (high)	−0.63	0.16	−3.96**	0.02	0.04	0.41	−0.32	0.05	−6.68***	0.29	0.04	7.17***	−0.20	0.04	−4.63***
Need for cognition	−0.25	0.07	−3.45***	0.07	0.03	2.89**	0.05	0.03	1.69	0.18	0.02	7.89***	0.07	0.02	2.91**
Political interest	−0.81	0.06	−13.30***	0.39	0.02	20.70***	0.26	0.02	12.90***	0.32	0.02	19.05***	0.17	0.02	9.32***
Political orientation (right)	0.00	0.03	0.06	−0.02	0.01	−2.04*	0.07	0.01	8.86***	0.00	0.01	0.58	0.05	0.01	6.99***
Media skepticism	−0.08	0.09	−1.00	−0.07	0.03	−2.87**	−0.08	0.03	−3.04**	−0.04	0.02	−1.58	−0.02	0.02	−0.97
Populist attitudes	−0.32	0.15	−2.10*	0.06	0.05	1.26	0.44	0.05	8.22***	−0.13	0.05	−2.81**	0.24	0.05	5.03***
R^2	.17			.25			.22			.17			.15		

Notes: $N = 10{,}570$. Unstandardized coefficients. Random intercepts are reported in the Online Appendix Tables A1 and A3.
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

positive (as the fixed effect had also indicated), in some countries, however, a negative relationship was established. Contrary to what was hypothesized, tabloid newspapers were used less frequently during the week the higher someone's populist attitudes were in Italy ($b = -.38$), the US ($b = -.33$), Poland ($b = -.30$), France ($b = -.21$), and Germany ($b = -.13$). Hence, the significant positive relationship between populist attitudes and tabloid news use that was found via the estimation of fixed-effects was not robust across countries.

The findings regarding the role of control variables lend confidence to the validity of the complete analysis. The strongest and, in all cases, positive and significant predictor of news exposure was political interest. Only news avoidance was associated negatively with political interest. The same was true for need for cognition, which, but in one case, positively related to news media type use and negatively related to news avoidance. When significant, education was positively related to the use of hard news and negatively related to soft news use. If media skepticism was significant, it was always associated with avoidance. Interestingly, right-wing orientation was significantly associated with lower use of public TV news and with stronger exposure to tabloid newspapers and commercial TV news. Regarding socio-demographics, men were more likely to watch news on public TV and women were more likely to watch news on commercial TV. Age was often positively related to media use.

Discussion

The results of Study I indicate that populist citizens in 11 countries are clearly not news avoiders. Rather, news exposure is more likely to occur the stronger one's populist attitudes. This finding, however, is the result of a strong TV news diet among populist citizens. More specifically, given that there was no relationship found between populist attitudes and public TV news use, this heavy TV news diet is based on strong commercial TV news reliance. Moreover, populist citizens, in general, were stronger users of tabloid newspapers than non-populist citizens. However, this finding was qualified by a country specific analysis, which revealed that in some countries populist citizens use tabloid newspapers less often during a week than those with low populist attitudes. Finally, as was assumed, citizens with strong populist attitudes tended to use quality newspapers less than those with low populist attitudes. Hence, except for H1a and H2b, the results generally confirm the postulated role of populist attitudes in news media use. Explanations for why populist citizens are just as likely to watch public TV news as non-populist citizens will be developed in the overall discussion.

The positive relationship between age and media use across all news media types points to a methodological limitation with this study. Exposure to all four news media types as measured in this study only referred to exposure to these types via traditional ways. However, there is no question that citizens also turn to mainstream news media via the Internet using their Smartphones, tablets or PCs. This is probably the case for younger citizens as they are the ones who more often use the Internet (Büchi, Just, & Latzer, 2016), and hence, older citizens may appear to be stronger news users in this study. Accordingly, given that the operationalization of exposure to news media types was not optimal, a replication is warranted using a measure of news exposure that also considers digital ways to access traditional news media. Replicating this study with the same list of predictors and

slightly altered dependent variables would lend further credibility to the results, providing a rationale for Study II.

Study II

Data

The second survey was conducted in April 2017 and included four countries, namely, France ($N = 540$), Germany ($N = 556$), Switzerland (German speaking part; $N = 551$), and United Kingdom ($N = 550$). Participants were recruited by the same survey company that was commissioned for the first study and identical recruitment and incentive procedures were applied. Twenty-seven percent of those invited successfully completed the survey with response rates ranging from 20% in the United Kingdom and 32% in Germany. The interviews were 21 minutes long on average. Because of missing data for predictor variables, 32 cases were deleted, which resulted in 2165 valid responses. Sample characteristics are displayed in Table A13 online. Although Study II included fewer countries than Study I, the four countries represented in this study were a part of Study I. For those measures that were similar to Study I, Study II served as a conceptual replication of Study I, that is, for the tests of RQ1, and H1a to H2b. H3, H3a, and H3b are tested only in Study II.

Measures

Exposure to news

Study II used the three-stage news exposure measure that was introduced in Study I (see Table A10 online for the complete instrument). Respondents identified their media use in the media, list, and frequency-stage. However, two differences occurred. First, while Study I strictly differentiated whether news outlets were accessed offline or online, Study II explicitly determined that the way of access was irrelevant. In other words, it did not matter whether respondents used news outlets via the TV, the printed versions of newspapers, or online using the browser of the computer, smartphone or tablet apps. This instruction was repeated on the different pages of the questionnaire, and moreover, during the list-stage and the frequency-stage, not only were the names of the news outlets presented but their URLs were also given. Secondly, the news outlets listed on the list-stage of the exposure measure differed slightly. However, except for three outlets, all outlets that were included in Study I were also included in Study II within the countries were this comparison was possible. Moreover, respondents had the option to write an open answer if they did not find their news outlets represented. As in Study I, open answers were only recoded if the respondent did not select outlets from the prepared lists, but only indicated they used another news show or another newspaper ($N = 85$).

With respect to the dependent variables, the media exposure measures were recoded parallel to Study I. News avoidance was a binary variable. If no medium was selected in the media-stage, the value 1 was assigned ($N = 81$). If at least one medium was selected, a 0 was assigned ($N = 2084$). The meanings of these values are parallel to those of Study I.

Exposure to news media types was recoded via the list- and frequency-stage variables as in Study I (see Table A11 online for the categorization of outlets in Study II). Eight

variables resulted from this procedure: public TV sum (ranged from 0 to 14), private TV sum (ranged from 0 to 6), quality newspaper sum (ranged from 0 to 9), tabloid newspaper sum (ranged from 0 to 14), public TV frequency ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 2.34$), private TV frequency ($M = 2.39$, $SD = 2.45$), quality newspapers frequency ($M = 1.99$, $SD = 2.43$), and tabloid newspapers frequency ($M = 1.64$, $SD = 2.24$, $N = 2165$).

Exposure to online only news, which has not been measured in Study I, was computed as a binary variable via the media-stage variables. A value of 1 was assigned to those respondents who indicated they receive all of their political information via social media or political blogs and/or specialized news sites only available on the Internet. In other words, the value of 1 was assigned to those respondents who avoid TV news, newspapers and radio news and choose to use only (alternative) online sources of information ($N = 28$). All remaining cases were assigned a value of 0 ($N = 2137$).

Study II measured the use of Facebook and Twitter separately, which was not pursued in Study I. If respondents in the media-stage indicated they used social media, e.g., Facebook, Twitter or YouTube, as a source for political information (quoted by $N = 1278$), they were guided to a follow-up question that asked which of the different social media platforms they specifically used. Among those were Facebook (quoted by $N = 972$) and Twitter (quoted by $N = 218$). In the analyses, Facebook and Twitter users were not contrasted to all remaining non-users in the sample but only to those, who had also indicated to use online news but then did not indicate to use Facebook ($N = 306$) or Twitter ($N = 1060$), respectively.

Populist attitudes

The measurement for populist attitudes paralleled that of Study I. In this study the 12 items reached a Cronbach's alpha value of .85 across all four countries.

Controls

As in Study I, sex, age, education, need for cognition, political interest, political orientation and media skepticism were included as controls. The operationalizations were the same for all variables except for political interest and need for cognition, which differed slightly from respective measures in Study I. Means, standard deviations and exact item wordings are available in Table A15 in the online supplemental file.

Results

Study II investigated the same research questions and hypotheses as Study I, ensuing with the investigation of a relationship between news avoidance and populist attitudes. With respect to research question one, populist attitudes were negatively related to news avoidance ($b = -0.47$, $p < .01$; Table 2), and this relation dissolved when TV news use was ignored ($b = -0.17$, *ns*; Table A4 online). As in Study I, populist attitudes were related to news exposure at first glance but upon closer examination, this relation was revealed to be based primarily on heavy TV news use.

Second, exposure to tabloid newspapers and commercial TV news was examined. H1a was partially supported. While populist attitudes positively related to the frequency of tabloid newspaper use ($b = 0.24$, $p < .001$; Table 2), there was no significant relationship between populist attitudes and the sum of tabloid newspapers ($b = 0.07$, *ns*, Table A5

Table 2. Fixed effects logistic and linear regressions predicting news avoidance and the mean frequency of news media genres use (Study II).

	News avoidance			Public TV news			Commercial TV news			Quality newspapers			Tabloid newspapers		
	b	*SE*	*z*	*b*	*SE*	*t*	*b*	*SE*	*t*	*b*	*SE*	*t*	*b*	*SE*	*t*
Fixed effects															
Intercept	4.16	0.98	4.24***	−0.58	0.42	−1.39	−1.94	0.47	−4.15***	−0.65	0.48	−1.37	−0.74	0.59	−1.24
Sex (female)	0.60	0.25	2.42*	0.05	0.09	0.50	0.08	0.10	0.83	0.03	0.10	0.27	0.17	0.09	1.88
Age	−0.03	0.01	−3.36***	0.05	0.00	14.80***	0.02	0.00	6.15***	0.02	0.00	5.82***	0.00	0.00	−0.78
Education (high)	−0.29	0.32	−0.88	−0.01	0.10	−0.10	−0.30	0.12	−2.58**	0.14	0.11	1.28	0.07	0.10	0.69
Need for cognition	−0.32	0.09	−3.69***	0.01	0.04	0.36	−0.01	0.04	−0.13	0.08	0.04	2.02*	0.06	0.04	1.67
Political interest	−0.65	0.10	−6.65***	0.35	0.03	10.50***	0.18	0.04	4.80***	0.40	0.04	11.17***	0.24	0.03	7.33***
Political orientation (right)	0.00	0.06	0.04	−0.02	0.02	−0.84	0.13	0.02	5.73***	−0.01	0.02	−0.28	0.06	0.02	3.13**
Media Skepticism	−0.02	0.09	−0.21	−0.14	0.04	−3.81***	−0.02	0.04	−0.55	−0.09	0.04	−2.14*	−0.09	0.04	−2.32*
Populist Attitudes	−0.47	0.17	−2.68**	0.06	0.07	0.80	0.54	0.08	6.67***	−0.03	0.08	−0.39	0.24	0.07	3.34***
R^2	.23			.20			.11			.16			.21		

Notes: $N = 2165$. Unstandardized coefficients. Random intercepts are reported in the Online Appendix Tables A4 and A6.
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

online). Compared to those with lower populist attitudes, populist citizens selected equal numbers of tabloid outlets but read those more often during the week. H1b was fully supported as populist citizens exhibited a robust commercial TV news use regarding the mean frequency ($b = 0.54$, $p < .001$; Table 2) as well as regarding the sum ($b = 0.20$, $p < .001$; Table A5 online).

The hypotheses regarding the exposure to quality newspapers (H2a) and public TV news (H2b) were both only partially supported. Populist attitudes negatively and significantly related to the sum of quality newspapers selected ($b = -0.09$, $p < .05$; Table A5 online), as well as to the sum of public TV news shows selected ($b = -0.06$, $p < .05$; Table A5 online), which first lend support to the hypotheses. However, no significant relationships were found between populist attitudes and the frequency of the use of quality newspapers ($b = -0.03$, *ns*; Table 2), and public TV news ($b = -0.06$, *ns*; Table 2), which lead to a partial rejection of H2a and H2b. Hence, citizens with strong populist attitudes selected fewer quality newspapers and fewer public TV news shows, but read or watched those just as frequently during the week as did those with lower populist attitudes.

The third set of hypotheses examined the association between populist citizens and online news sources. First, the likelihood of only using digital born news, that is, no traditional news media at all, did not increase with increasing populist attitudes ($b = -0.02$, *ns*, $N = 2137$; Table 3). H3 was therefore not supported. However, when analyzing online news use in more detail, interesting patterns emerged. Study II revealed that the likelihood of using Facebook increased with stronger populist attitudes ($b = 0.31$, $p < .01$; $N = 1278$) but that the likelihood of using Twitter decreased with stronger populist attitudes ($b = -0.28$, $p < .05$; $N = 1278$). Thus, among those who used the Internet to get politically informed, those with populist attitudes were more likely to use Facebook to obtain political information, while those with lower populist attitudes preferred to use Twitter, supporting H3a and H3b (Table 3).[2]

A model comparison was undertaken to test for the robustness of findings across countries (RQ2). For Study II BIC values were always smaller for the fixed-effects models and in no case random-effects models were to be preferred. Findings reported for this study are hence interpreted as robust across countries.

Table 3. Fixed effects logistic regressions predicting online only news, Facebook and Twitter use (Study II).

	Online only news			Facebook			Twitter		
	b	*SE*	*z*	*b*	*SE*	*z*	*b*	*SE*	*z*
Fixed effects									
Intercept	−4.22	1.57	−2.69**	1.83	0.57	3.19**	−0.36	0.67	−0.53
Sex (female)	−0.96	0.42	−2.29*	0.32	0.14	2.31*	−0.65	0.16	−4.12***
Age	−0.02	0.01	−1.35	−0.02	0.00	−3.38***	−0.02	0.01	−3.21**
Education (high)	0.06	0.47	0.14	0.02	0.15	0.14	0.14	0.17	0.85
Need for cognition	−0.01	0.14	−0.06	−0.09	0.06	−1.43	0.06	0.07	0.90
Political interest	−0.30	0.13	−2.37*	−0.22	0.06	−3.92***	0.16	0.06	2.64**
Political orientation (right)	0.04	0.08	0.50	0.00	0.03	0.06	0.01	0.03	0.31
Media skepticism	0.66	0.17	3.88***	−0.01	0.06	−0.19	0.04	0.06	0.68
Populist attitudes	−0.02	0.32	−0.05	0.31	0.11	2.79**	−0.28	0.12	−2.20*
Nagelkerkes R^2	.11			.08			.06		
N	2165			1278			1278		

Notes: Unstandardized coefficients. Random intercepts are reported in the Online Appendix Table A7.
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

Findings regarding the control variables largely parallel what was revealed in Study I. Specifically, political interest was positively related to the use of all media types and was negatively associated with news avoidance. Need for cognition was positively related to quality newspaper use but not related to any other media type use. Higher educated respondents preferred quality newspapers, whereas lower educated respondents preferred commercial TV news. Right-wing political orientation coincided with the use of tabloid newspaper and commercial TV news use. Media skepticism, if significant, was negatively related to the consumption of different news media types. Sex was non-significant when it came to traditional news use, but males were shown to be more likely among those that only used online news and Twitter. Importantly, age had mixed associations to exposure to different news media types, after online access possibilities to the different news media types were taken into account. Only the use of public service TV news was consistently associated with an increase in age.

Discussion

The findings of Study II largely replicated the findings of Study I. Although the operationalization of the dependent variables differed slightly, the broad pattern of results was the same. First, populist attitudes were not related to news avoidance but rather, news avoidance was significantly less likely among those with stronger populist attitudes. Second, populist attitudes were strongly associated with commercial TV news use. The stronger someone supported the populist ideas, the more commercial TV news shows that person watched. The association between tabloid press use and populist attitudes was generally positive but also not very robust. Specifically, while on average populist citizens used tabloid newspapers more frequently during a week than non-populist citizens did, no such relationship was established regarding the number of selected tabloid press outlets. Third, in Study II, populist citizens watched fewer public TV news shows compared to non-populist citizens to a small, but significant degree. However, on average, those with populist attitudes watched public TV news shows with the same frequency during the week as did those with lower populist attitudes. The same pattern emerged for the relationship between populist attitudes and quality newspaper use. While those with populist attitudes used fewer quality newspapers compared to those with lower populist attitudes, they read them just as frequently during the week.

Going beyond traditional news use, the results from Study II extended insights into populist citizens' media use regarding online news sources. The findings indicate that populist citizens were no more likely than non-populist citizens to receive political information only via specific online news sources. However, populist citizens were more inclined to use Facebook and less inclined to use Twitter compared to non-populist citizens.

Overall discussion

These two large-scale multi-national studies are the first to systematically investigate populist citizens' media use in a comparative manner. What the findings reveal about populist citizens media use is telling. First of all, the results indicate that populist citizens are not news avoiders. Conversely, news exposure across media types is even more likely

for those with stronger populist attitudes. Rather than avoiding news, populist citizens pay attention to and follow political affairs. At first sight, this is a preferable outcome when judged from a normative perspective, as it speaks against a far-reaching alienation from the political process.

However, further analyses of this study call for caution. The strong relationship between populist attitudes and news exposure is mainly driven by strong TV news diets with a pronounced focus on commercial TV news. The second most prominent media type within the populist citizens' media diet is the tabloid newspaper. Even though this finding was not established in all investigated countries of Study I, the majority of analyses support this interpretation. Thus, populist citizens strongly rely on news types that are often found to distribute soft news (Reinemann et al., 2016). No or negative relationships were established between populist attitudes and the two hard news media types. This suggests an overall worrisome news media selection exhibited by populist citizens across Europe and the United States.

The two favored media types, tabloid newspapers and commercial TV news, are among the most sensationalist, scandalized, and dramatized news sources (Reinemann et al., 2016). In addition to this, tabloid newspapers focus on the divide between the people and the elite (Klein, 1998), and moreover, contain a higher number of populist blame attributions in comparison to quality newspapers (Hameleers et al., 2017b). While these findings support the hypotheses regarding the appeal of popularized media outlets to populist readerships (Krämer, 2014; Mazzoleni, 2003), their potential consequences are alarming. Though soft news is also discussed as a gateway into politics (Baum, 2002; Norris, 2003), mounting evidence demonstrates that the link between soft news exposure and political cynicism is robust also against influences of political knowledge and political interest (Boukes & Boomgaarden, 2015). Thus, based on what is known about the effects of soft news, it is difficult to imagine how this media choice can increase the low political trust levels that characterize populist citizens.

Against the backdrop of these findings, the study of media type use along populist attitudes provides some evidence for polarized news audiences. Especially, commercial TV news audiences appear polarized in that citizens with strong populist attitudes adhere more to this news type than citizens with low populist attitudes do. As hence, populist citizens primarily use a news media type that has the strong potential to reinforce their priors, it is suggested that the new cultural cleavage between populist citizens and others not supporting the ideology may widen in the future.

However, other analysis of this study reveal that against the expectations, populist citizens do not exhibit a much lower public TV news exposure compared to those with lower populist attitudes. Rather, the results indicate that across all countries, populist citizens are just as likely as non-populist citizens to watch news produced by public service broadcasters. Given the strong media skepticism voiced by populist actors and their followers regarding this media type, this finding is surprising. Of course, regarding the dangers of polarizing news audiences, this could be regarded as good news. Populist citizens are not dropping out of the mainstream political discourse, but rather, they still share a news agenda with non-populist citizens. This points to a bridging role of public service TV (cf. Castro, Nir, & Skovsgaard, 2018). However, nothing is known about the motivation by which populist citizens approach these media, or how the received information is processed. The literature offers different ideas for why one could turn to potentially

counter-attitudinal news. Habitual news use or the wish to stay connected with society could be named as reasons. Public broadcasters generally reach large audiences, and populist citizens may just want to know what potentially many know. That also quality news were shown to spread elements of the populist worldview could be another reason for populist citizens to approach these outlets (Akkerman, 2011).

However, the hostile media attitudes held by populist citizens likely trigger specific motives that could prevent them from completely turning away from these media sources. As populist citizens perceive themselves to be suppressed by those in power, they may not turn away from public TV news because they need to stay informed about the actions of their opponents. In a similar vein, populist citizens may approach the mainstream news media to confirm their own opinions, that is, that the political elite lies and that the media support it through negative reports about populist actors. Following this notion, hard news media may be to populist citizens what Tsfati and Cappella refer to as "a source of support for their skepticism" (2003, p. 519). These motivational layers are connected to what has been called defense motivation (Brenes Peralta, Wojcieszak, Lelkes, & & Vreese, 2017, p. 836) or surveillance (Knobloch-Westerwick & Kleinman, 2011, p. 171; cf. Garrett & Stroud, 2014) in other studies. Future research needs to examine these drivers for exposure more closely. It is important to take into account why news is approached and how it is processed.

The final finding of this study can also be reflected in this light. Regarding online news use, populist citizens prefer Facebook as a means to obtain political information. Future research should investigate the specific news populist citizens garner from Facebook, and just as importantly, how mainstream news is framed within social media. Discussions or information shared online within reference groups or via alternative news outlets likely shape the perception of mainstream news reports.

Limitations

This study carries several limitations that warrant discussion. First, as two cross-sectional data sets were used no causal conclusions can be made. However, as it was the aim to reveal patterns of populist media use and eventually detect polarized news audiences, the chosen approach is considered adequate. Nonetheless, longitudinal analyses are desirable, as those could investigate the potential reinforcing spirals between media use and populist attitudes (cf. Slater, 2007). Indeed, populist attitudes may also be an attitudinal outcome of heavy commercial TV and tabloid news diets. The samples were also not fully representative what limits the generalizability of the findings. However, the regression approach allowed for the inclusion of many control variables to account for potential sampling biases as well as for potential confounds to the investigated relationship between populist attitudes and media use. The considered concepts reflect sociological, psychological, political and communication science perspectives on media use. Despite the presence of these controls, populist attitudes are still found to significantly relate to different media type variables. However, future research should look closer into potentially interesting interdependencies between the different predictors using mediation and moderation analysis and also further controls.

Further, it needs to be acknowledged that the news exposure measure is based on self-reports, and thus, the responses may be biased. For example, social desirability could have

led respondents to select hard news outlets as using such outlets may be perceived as an educated behavior. However, the case may be different with respect to populist citizens. Taking their strong media skepticism into account, the socially desirable answer for a populist citizen would be to dispute exposure to the suspected dishonest media. As populist citizens claim, nonetheless, to use such outlets, social desirability may not have been an issue in this study. Moreover, exposure to tabloid and commercial TV news should as well be difficult to admit as it is generally not socially desirable to use such news sources. Populist citizens, however, also selected these outlets when filling out the questionnaire.

Other problems regarding the exposure measure may have emerged from people's generally bad memories. To report on one's own news exposure is a cognitively demanding task and replies are likely imperfect (Andersen et al., 2016). However, with the approach chosen for this study, every attempt was made to optimize the measurement. The lists contained the most watched or read outlets per country as well as open replies. Furthermore, respondents were asked to reflect on their use of news sources during the past week, a task that is considered less demanding than reflecting on one's general news exposure (Andersen et al., 2016). Thus, while the implementation of tracking techniques is certainly interesting for future research, the approach chosen here adhered to best practice examples.

Another limitation to this study lies in the categorization of news outlets to the four identified media types. Indeed, the large scale of this study came at the cost of some level of accuracy. However, despite the use of tabloid newspapers, findings were robust and stable across countries, what can be interpreted as a post hoc validation of the media type categorization. Nevertheless, future research should look into country differences more carefully than it was possible within this large scale and initial comparative study on populist citizens media use. Accounting for differences in media systems and country specific market characteristics will clearly offer additional insights into populist citizens' media use.

Final remarks

Populist citizens are certainly low on political trust and they are not just skeptical toward the media but rather show sweeping accusations that allow for no exceptions. Without much differentiation the media are accused to lie and conspire with the political elite to the disadvantage of the people. There may be little hope that any news media type, be it hard or soft news, will be able to rescind this critical judgement. Cappella and Jamieson describe a cynic as one who "begins with mistrust and must be persuaded to the opposite view" (1997, p. 141). It remains an open question how this can be accomplished against the Manichean worldview of populist citizens. Their distinguished media diet with a focus on commercial TV news, tabloid newspapers, and Facebook potentially helps to engrave the new societal cleavage in populist citizens' minds and therefore also on the level of society.

Notes

1. In an additional analysis, income was included as a further control to all models (see Table A14 online for a measurement report). This did not change the results with regard to populist attitudes. Income itself related positively to different media use variables (i.e., sum and frequency of quality press use, sum and frequency of tabloid press use, and sum of public

TV news use). However, for this analysis, 10 percent of the participants had to be excluded due to missing values on this variable. Therefore, income was not used within the hypothesis testing.
2. The influence of income was tested in an additional analysis. No changes occurred regarding the role of populist attitudes. Income was positively related to the sum and frequency of quality press use, to the sum of tabloid press outlets used as well as negatively related to news avoidance. The measurement for income is reported in Table A15 online.

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Article IV

Who uses anti-elitist alternative media? Exploring predictors of occasional and frequent exposure

Müller, P. & Schulz A.

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Alternative media for a populist audience? Exploring political and media use predictors of exposure to Breitbart, Sputnik, and Co.

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ABSTRACT

Alongside the recent rise of political populism, a new type of alternative media has established in past years that allegedly contribute to the distribution of the populist narrative. Using a large-scale quota survey of German Internet users ($n = 1346$) we investigate political and media use predictors of exposure to alternative media with an affinity to populism (AMP). Results reveal substantial differences between occasional and frequent AMP users. While both groups heavily use Twitter and Facebook for political information, occasional AMP users exhibit hardly any specific political convictions (except that they feel less personally deprived than non-users). Contrary to that, frequent AMP exposure is related to higher personal relative deprivation, stronger populist attitudes and a higher likelihood to vote for the right-wing populist party *AfD*. Against this background, frequent AMP use can be interpreted as partisan selective exposure whereas occasional AMP exposure might result from incidental contact via social media platforms. These findings are discussed regarding the role of alternative and social media in the recent populism wave.

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So called 'alternative media' possess the potential to constitute a counter-public to mainstream political discourse (Downey & Fenton, 2003). While alternative media have long lived in the shadow of scientific interest (Downing, 2003) scholars have more extensively investigated their role in processes of political opinion formation and mobilization in recent years. Research indicates that alternative media are often strongly connected with the emergence of grassroots political movements such as the Arab Spring or Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement (Howard & Hussain, 2013; Leung & Lee, 2014). Some authors even classify alternative journalism as a form of political activism (e.g., Harcup, 2011). One reason why alternative media have been gaining momentum in recent years can be seen in the broad diffusion of the Internet that has greatly lowered the bar for establishing a news outlet (Fenton & Barassi, 2011).

Besides such technical opportunity structures, a general dissatisfaction with mainstream media is another important driver of an upsurge of alternative news providers.

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In recent years, a number of countries worldwide has witnessed an erosion of media trust (Newman, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos, & Nielsen, 2019, p. 21). Simultaneously, political actors that are combining political populism with a right-wing political ideology have risen (see, e.g., Inglehart & Norris, 2016). Populism's main claim is that the will of the people should have the highest priority in political decision-making (Mudde, 2004). Studies indicate that support for a populist agenda is linked to low media trust (Fawzi, 2019) as well as stronger perceptions of mainstream media hostility (Schulz, Wirth, & Müller, 2018). Against this backdrop, it does not come as a surprise that the populist wave is as well accompanied by a number of alternative media which promote a discourse that speaks to the populist narrative.

In recent years, scholars have started to investigate how these alternative media with an affinity to populism (AMP) relate to the social media channels of populist political actors (Bachl, 2018; Haller & Holt, 2018; Holt, 2017). However, little is known about the users of AMP (but, see, Newman, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos, Levy, & Nielsen, 2018). To clarify the role AMP might play in the promotion of political populism, it seems important to better understand which users are exposed to AMP – and why. This is the aim of the present research. It sheds light upon this question using a large quota survey of German Internet users. More specifically, we investigate whether political and media use predictors (as well as a number of covariates) can help to differentiate between occasional and frequent exposure to AMP.

What are alternative media with an affinity to populism?

Many researchers have addressed questions of how to define and conceptualize 'alternative media' (see, e.g., Atton, 2002; Bailey, Cammaert, & Carpentier, 2007; Hamilton, 2000). A clear consent upon a single unequivocal definition of the term is however missing (Downing, 2003). Rather, authors have stressed different features of alternative media as defining elements, for instance their participatory potential (Fenton & Barassi, 2011; Hamilton, 2000), their political radicalism (Atton, 2002; Downing, 2003), or their societal impact as a form of journalistic activism (Downey & Fenton, 2003; Harcup, 2011). Only very recently, Holt, Figenschou, and Frischlich (2019) have criticized that most of these definitions can only be applied to the context of progressive alternative media. However, in recent years, emerging news outlets with a decidedly anti-mainstream stance have often adopted rather reactionary political positions or have even been connected to spreading disinformation. Therefore, the authors suggest to use 'alternative media' as a non-normative umbrella term describing, in a broader sense, all media outlets that position themselves (or are perceived as) non-hegemonic (Holt et al., 2019). In a second step, specific subgroups of alternative media (such as AMP) can be identified.

In the German context, outlets like *Epoch Times*, *Compact* or *RT Deutsch*, harshly criticize the political elites and accuse the mainstream media to participate in an elite conspiracy against ordinary people. This is in line with the overall populist narrative. Political populism is defined as a thin-centered ideology, i.e., a rather narrow set of ideas instead of a complete worldview (Mudde, 2004; Wirth et al., 2016). At its core it argues that there is an unresolvable antagonism between the ruling societal and political elite and the pure and honest people. The latter are deemed to be the legitimate sovereign of any state. However, the people are depicted as being betrayed of their legitimate power

by an elite conspiracy that spreads across all societal fields. Consequently, many populist politicians attack established news outlets as participating in the alleged elite conspiracy (Schulz, Wirth, et al., 2018). Within this setting, populist alternative news media have the possibility to fill a gap on the news market by addressing an audience which has already internalized this kind of anti-media populism. In that sense, populist coverage can be identified as a main mission of these outlets (for similar assessments see, Bachl, 2018; Benkler, Faris, & Roberts, 2018; Haller & Holt, 2018; Holt, 2017; Storz, 2015).

However, systematic content analyses of AMP outlets are still lacking. Therefore, it remains unclear how exactly populism manifests itself in their discourse. Research on mainstream journalistic media has found that populism occurs as a fragmented ideology in media coverage (Müller et al., 2017). This means that different features of the populist ideology (people-centrism, anti-elitism, and demand for popular sovereignty) are not equally distributed across media outlets. Similarly, it can be assumed that different AMP outlets contain their own specific combination of populist messages. This does not need to be limited to thin populism. It has been argued that populism in many of its real-world occasions is completed by exclusionist ideas (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007). That says that the features that comprise thin populism are replenished with ideas as to a rejection of at least one other outgroup next to the political elite. In forms of contemporary right-wing populism this outgroup is being found in migrants. Thus, (xenophobic) exclusionism within alternative media's discourse can also indicate a populist slant, if it is combined with other elements of the populist ideology such as anti-elitism or people-centrism.

Who uses alternative media with an affinity to populism?

While only a few authors have investigated the discourse of AMP outlets (Holt, 2017) or their use as sources within the social media communication of populist political actors (Bachl, 2018; Haller & Holt, 2018), research on the audiences of AMP is even more scarce. Studies have investigated the media use of citizens with an affinity to political populism (Hameleers, Bos, & de Vreese, 2017; Schulz, 2019). Moreover, it has been shown that social media use is a significant predictor of voting for right-wing populist politicians (Groshek & Koc-Michalska, 2017). However, this research did not explicitly include AMP exposure.

First insights are offered by analyses from the *Reuters Institute Digital News Report* (Newman et al., 2018). For different countries, the study finds that users of alternative and partisan news websites tend to hold more extreme positions on the political left-right spectrum, strongly distrust established news media, and are predominantly male. For Germany in particular, also younger age was an important factor (Newman et al., 2018). These findings offer a valuable starting point for further investigations on predictors of using AMP. However, further research is necessary to clarify whether the audiences of allegedly populist alternative media do in fact have a strong relationship to political populism. The present endeavor follows this route by focusing on political predictor variables that are indicative for citizens' affinity to populism. Moreover, we consider the additional media use preferences of AMP users that have been largely neglected thus far. Moreover, we account for potential differences between occasional and frequent users of AMP.

The reason for differentiating between occasional and frequent use resides in the important role played by SNS such as *Facebook* or *Twitter* in disseminating populist content (Alvares & Dahlgren, 2016; Ernst, Engesser, Büchel, Blassnig, & Esser, 2017; Krämer,

2017). In comparison to established news outlets AMP have the disadvantage of not being eminently known. It is thus of particular importance for them to extend their audience and make new users aware of their existence. For this purpose, SNS can be a very important tool. Users of these platforms do not only get to see the content that they actively selected but also related contents that are recommended by other users and selected by the platforms' algorithms. This increases the likelihood for an un-established news outlet to gain new users. Consequently, many alternative media heavily rely upon SNS for the distribution of their contents (Fenton & Barassi, 2011). For AMP, this means that two different groups of users with different predispositions could exist: (1) heavy users who are rather frequently exposed to the messages of one or more AMP outlets as part of their usual news routine, and (2) occasional users who stumble across information from AMP from time to time via their SNS accounts (see, Fletcher & Nielsen, 2018).

Political predictors

Extant research points to the importance of individual cognitive predispositions, most importantly political consciousness, in predicting alternative media exposure (Downing, 2003). For instance, political attitudes have been demonstrated to be closely linked to using alternative media in a Hong Kong sample (Leung & Lee, 2014). This argument is supported by research on selective exposure according to which individuals are predominantly drawn to content that has the potential to reinforce own views (Stroud, 2008). That way, AMP might support populist actors in gaining electoral success. Especially frequent AMP exposure could relate to voting for populist parties. To our knowledge, this relationship has not been tested empirically yet. However, research shows that passive social media exposure relates to preferences for the populist candidate Donald Trump during the 2016 US presidential campaign (Groshek & Koc-Michalska, 2017). Since AMP heavily rely upon social media as a distribution platform, this can be read as a first support of our notion. In Germany, where the present study was conducted, *Alternative für Deutschland* (*AfD*) is the only major political party that has been unequivocally considered populist in the research literature (Lees, 2018). Notably, this party combines populist anti-elitism with a right-wing exclusionist political ideology – and so do their voters (Hansen & Olsen, 2019). Therefore, we hypothesize:

H1: Higher *AfD* vote probability will predict frequent AMP exposure.

Moreover, research has shown that there is a distinct set of ideas related to the thin populist ideology – namely anti-elitism attitudes, a preference for popular sovereignty, and a belief in the homogeneity and virtuousness of the people – that form a common attitudinal construct (Schulz, Müller, et al., 2018). These populist attitudes are an important predictor of voting for populist parties (Rooduijn, 2014; van Hauwaert & van Kessel, 2018). It seems plausible to assume that they also promote the use of AMP. As this again describes intentional rather than incidental exposure, we expect that populist attitudes can particularly be found among frequent users of AMP:

H2: Populist attitudes will predict frequent AMP exposure.

As a thin-centered ideology, populism can be enriched with left- as well as right-wing ideological components. Consequently, research has found populist attitudes in

combination with both left- and right-wing political convictions among different groups of citizens (van Hauwaert & van Kessel, 2018). This supports the notion that political populism is neither distinctly left- or right-wing as is oftentimes claimed by populist politicians and AMP alike. However, their discourse often features clear elements of either side. Consequently, Newman et al. (2018) found that in some countries exposure to AMP (such as *Breitbart*, *Infowars*, or Austrian *unzensuriert.at*) is related to a right-leaning political orientation, some outlets such as US outlet *Occupy Democrats* or British *Another Angry Voice* have a left-leaning audience. However, in some countries under consideration political orientation of AMP users did not clearly differ from that of other news outlets. This leaves us with a certain ambiguity as to the role of political left-right orientation for using AMP. Therefore, we ask:

RQ1: How is political left-right orientation related to AMP exposure?

An important factor in support for populist parties and the emergence of populist attitudes seems to be the subjective perception of the current state of society. For instance, Inglehart and Norris (2016) observed a conditional effect of subjective economic insecurity on voting for populist parties that depended on authoritarianism. A particular form of societal dissatisfaction that is widely acknowledged as influential also in populism research is the feeling of relative deprivation. This construct describes a feeling of resentment and perceived lack of social recognition or resources that the self, as in individual relative deprivation, or the self's group, as in collective relative deprivation, deem to be entitled of. Different studies demonstrated that relative deprivation relates to populist attitudes, voting for populist parties (Elchardus & Spruyt, 2016; Spruyt, Keppens, & van Droogenbroeck, 2016), or also selective exposure to populist content (Hameleers, Bos, & de Vreese, 2018).

Mostly, these studies have conceptualized collective, and not individual relative deprivation. This corresponds to the observation that populism as an ideology heavily employs a social identity rhetoric (Krämer, 2014; Müller et al., 2017) and that collective rather than personal relative deprivation has been found to trigger collective action (Walker & Mann, 1987). But also individual relative deprivation was shown to explain specific, individually oriented coping strategies (e.g., Kawakami & Dion, 1995). Self-selecting into reinforcing information offered by alternative news platforms online can be regarded a passive and not necessarily collective type of behavior. AMP exposure could thus very well be an individually oriented strategy that people choose in order to cope with feelings of personal relative deprivation, especially if it is conducted in a passive manner of mere consumption. However, if users actively engaged with AMP, for instance, by commenting or sharing news items, also collective relative deprivation could explain AMP exposure. Therefore, we ask:

RQ2: How are personal and collective relative deprivation related to AMP exposure?

Media use predictors

Downing (2003) suggested that in order to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of alternative media's users research should not only look at factors within the users but also at the technological platforms that are being used to access news content. The

study by Leung and Lee (2014) has shown that using SNS for news acquisition is a very strong predictor of alternative media exposure. However, it appears worthwhile to further differentiate this notion. A large body of research suggests that news exposure via SNS is different from other ways to access news (e.g., Costera Meijer & Groot Kormelink, 2015; Glynn, Huge, & Hoffman, 2012; Schäfer, Sülflow, & Müller, 2017). Most notably, many users are incidentally exposed to news via SNS (Fletcher & Nielsen, 2018; Valeriani & Vaccari, 2016). We have argued that such incidental exposure to AMP content via SNS could be an important explanation for occasional contact. In this case, individuals who do not have strong attitudinal bonds to AMP and their contents would receive posts by AMP from time to time through their SNS news feed, for instance because these posts were liked, commented or shared by other users in their network. That way, SNS could help AMP to broaden their audience beyond a strongly attached core group. Consequently, we assume that:

H3: Using SNS for political information will predict occasional AMP exposure.

When it comes to differences between SNS platforms, research suggests that Twitter more frequently leads to incidental news exposure than Facebook (Fletcher & Nielsen, 2018). However, research on the distribution of populist content on SNS indicates that Facebook, rather than Twitter, is a central hub for the populist message (Ernst et al., 2017). This means that for AMP outlets Facebook could play a central role as well. Supporting this impression, populist citizens in Europe and the US are more strongly using Facebook for news than non-populists (Newman et al., 2019, p. 42). Taken together, these findings do not allow for specific hypotheses as to the role played by different SNS for the distribution of AMP's content. Therefore, we ask an open-ended research question:

RQ3: Are there differences between using Facebook and Twitter for political information in predicting AMP exposure?

Moreover, research suggests that populist citizens have certain media use preferences that distinguish them from other individuals. Overall, populist citizens have a comparably high exposure to political news, especially to entertaining news content from sources such as tabloid newspapers and private television (Hameleers et al., 2017; Schulz, 2019). At the same time, they do not seem to value quality newspapers (Schulz, 2019) which is in line with anti-media populist sentiments. Contrary to that, Jackob (2010) found that alternative media users in Germany used television news less frequently than others but heavily relied upon quality print media. Therefore, we ask:

RQ4: How is using traditional news sources (quality and tabloid newspapers, public and private television) related to AMP exposure?

Method

Procedure and sample

In order to test our hypotheses and research questions we conducted a quota survey of German Internet users in the week before the German federal election (24 September 2017) between 12 September and 19 September 2017. Participants were recruited from an online-access panel of an ISO-certified commercial research company. Using a quota

procedure for age, gender, and education the sample intended to reflect the German electorate above 18 years of age in its basic demographic characteristics. The final data set consisted of $n = 1346$ completed interviews (age: $M = 49.92$; $SD = 15.91$; 50.7% female; 44.7% with the highest German school degree 'Abitur'). Participants answered a longer questionnaire on political and societal topics within which the measures for the present study were embedded. The questionnaire was distributed among panel members via e-mail and was answered online.

Selection of AMP outlets

This study examines the case of Germany where the AMP market has been comparably large in recent years. It is important to note that in the German case the political landscape has a stronger tendency towards right-wing populism. Consequently, also many AMP outlets that are relevant to a German audience appear to feature a nationalist and right-wing exclusionist political agenda such as *Junge Freiheit* (von Nordheim, Müller, & Scheppe, 2019). However, certainly not all alternative media outlets in Germany that speak to the populist narrative clearly contain right-wing standpoints. For instance, *KenFM* basically follows an anti-elitist agenda that is often also combined with left-wing issue positions (Storz, 2015). Moreover, also Russia and US based outlets such as *RT deutsch*, *Sputnik* or *Epoch Times* are relevant to a German audience. These outlets mainly seem to contain positions against German societal and political elites.

However, in lack of systematic content analyses, we had to rely on the outlet's self-descriptions and a variety of different secondary sources in order to identify AMP candidate outlets. For instance, *PI News* claims that its main topic is the manipulation of the population by traditional media and politicians (PI News, 2019). A list of outlets that we assumed to be contain populist ideas was pre-tested in a survey in April 2017. The final study was then limited to the 12 best-known outlets: *Breitbart*, *Compact*, *Epoch Times*, *Infowars*, *Junge Freiheit*, *KenFM*, *Kopp Report*, *PI News*, *RT Deutsch*, *Sezession*, *Sputnik*, and *Tichys Einblick*. While these outlets differ in many respects (e.g., funding, organizational structure, professionalism, issue agenda, age, distribution strategy), all of them offer a discourse that features elements of populist anti-elitism and people-centrism.

Measures

Exposure to AMP

Using a list-frequency technique (Andersen, de Vreese, & Albæk, 2016) we asked respondents to report their frequency of exposure to AMP. They were presented with a list of the selected AMP outlets for which they were asked to indicate whether they knew the outlets at all and if so, how frequently they were exposed to them on a scale from 0 = never to 5 = very frequently. In order to measure direct exposure through the outlets' websites (or printed versions) as well as exposure via SNS we only asked respondents to assess their frequency of exposure to the content of the respective news outlets leaving open the modalities of access to this content. The percentage of participants who stated to be exposed to the respective outlets at least very rarely ranged between 8.2% and 15.3% (see Table 1). The number of frequent or very frequent users ranged between 2.9% and 1.6%. For further

Table 1. Descriptive results for AMP exposure.

Outlet	Do not know the outlet	Know, but never use the outlet	Use the outlet at least 'very rarely'
Breitbart	954 (70.9%)	261 (19.4%)	131 (9.6%)
Compact	947 (70.4%)	193 (14.3%)	206 (15.3%)
Epoch Times	1119 (83.1%)	94 (7.0%)	133 (9.8%)
Infowars	1135 (84.3%)	86 (6.4%)	125 (9.3%)
Junge Freiheit	1014 (75.3%)	174 (12.9%)	158 (11.7%)
KenFM	1143 (84.9%)	83 (6.2%)	120 (8.9%)
Kopp Online	1050 (78.0%)	129 (9.5%)	167 (12.4%)
PI News	1087 (80.8%)	110 (8.2%)	149 (11.1%)
RT deutsch	1013 (75.3%)	152 (11.3%)	181 (13.4%)
Sezession	1165 (86.6%)	70 (5.2%)	111 (8.2%)
Sputnik	864 (64.2%)	281 (20.9%)	201 (14.9%)
Tichy's Einblick	1133 (84.2%)	76 (5.6%)	137 (10.2%)

Notes: $n = 1346$. Values are absolute frequencies with relative frequencies in parentheses.

analyses, answers on the different AMP outlets were collapsed in a categorical variable. If respondents answered they never used any of the selected AMP outlets they were coded 0 for this new variable (71.9% of respondents). If they stated to use one or more outlets at least 'very rarely' but none of them 'frequently' or 'very frequently' they were assigned the code 1 (12.6% of respondents). As soon as they indicated to use one or more outlets 'frequently' or 'very frequently' they were assigned the code 2 (15.5% of respondents). This was necessary in order to test whether AMP exposure is indeed related non-linearly to some of the predictor variables under consideration.

AfD *vote probability*

The probability of voting for right-wing populist party AfD was assessed using a single item that was embedded in a list of all major German parties. Individuals were asked to indicate the likelihood of voting for the party in the upcoming German national election. Answers were given on a seven-step scale from 1 = very unlikely to 7 = very likely ($M = 2.24$; $SD = 2.11$).

Populist attitudes

Populist attitudes were assessed using an established three-dimensional 12-item inventory by Schulz, Müller, et al. (2018). The scale includes four items for each of the three subdimensions anti-elitism (e.g., 'MPs in Parliament very quickly lose touch with ordinary people.'), demand for popular sovereignty (e.g., 'The people should be asked whenever important decisions are taken.'), and belief in a homogenous and virtuous people (e.g., 'Ordinary people share the same values and interests.'; for a full list of items, see Appendix 1). Answers were given on a seven-point scale from 1 = do not agree at all to 7 = fully agree. For further analyses, a mean index was calculated from the 12 items ($M = 4.86$; $SD = 1.12$; Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$).

Personal and collective relative deprivation

These constructs were measured with three items each (for a full list of items, see Appendix 1). Drawing from Elchardus and Spruyt (2016), the items for personal relative deprivation estimated the perceived personal life-satisfaction in relation to the country context or in relation to a normative judgment (e.g., 'I, personally, never get what I in fact deserve'). The items for collective relative deprivation view the perceived situation of

the in-group in the societal context (e.g., 'Whichever way you look at it, people like me never get what they in fact deserve in this society.'). Answers were given on a seven-step scale from 1 = do not agree at all to 7 = fully agree. As the items of the two constructs have certain commonalities, we calculated a principal component analysis with varimax rotation across all items to test the bipartite factor structure. The analysis extracted two factors for personal and collective relative deprivation on which the items loaded as expected. For data analysis, items were therefore merged into two separate mean indices (personal relative deprivation: $M = 3.00$; $SD = 1.71$; Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$; collective relative deprivation: $M = 4.33$; $SD = 1.74$; Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$).

Media use for political information

The use of media outlets was assessed with single items using a ten-step scale. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they usually used a certain type of media never (=1), less than once per week (=2), once (=3), twice (=4), up to seven times per week (=9), or several times each day (=10) to receive political information. All items repeated that we were interested in usage 'for political information'. Items for the use of Facebook ($M = 3.75$; $SD = 3.32$) and Twitter ($M = 1.94$; $SD = 2.20$) simply contained the names of the two platforms. For quality ($M = 3.72$; $SD = 2.92$) and tabloid newspapers ($M = 2.94$; $SD = 2.75$) as well as for public ($M = 4.81$; $SD = 3.13$) and private television ($M = 6.56$; $SD = 3.07$) the items briefly illustrated which type of media was meant using examples (e.g., 'How often do you use so called quality newspapers or their websites for political information (e.g., *FAZ/faz.net*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, …)?').

Covariates

For control purposes, a number of well-established political and socio-demographic constructs has additionally been measured. First, political orientation on the left-right axis was assessed with a single-item measure on a scale from 1 = left to 10 = right ($M = 5.14$; $SD = 2.00$). These answers were re-coded into a five-step political extremism variable ($M = 2.08$; $SD = 1.27$) where 1 indicates the lowest level of extremism (values 5 and 6 on the original scale) and 5 the highest (values 1 and 10 on the original scale). Moreover, we measured political interest using three items (e.g., 'I get informed about politics on a daily basis'). Answers were given on the same seven-point scale that was used for populist attitudes. Again, a mean index was calculated for further analysis ($M = 4.91$; $SD = 1.64$; Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$). Next to age ($M = 49.92$; $SD = 15.91$) and gender (50.7% female) also formal education was assessed. Participants selected their highest educational degree from a list of four options (no or lowest German secondary degree 'Hauptschulabschluss': 18.6%; medium secondary degree 'Realschulabschluss': 36.7%; highest secondary degree 'Abitur': 20.2%; college or university degree: 24.3%).

Results

In order to account for the potentially non-linear nature of relationships under consideration we used multinomial logistic regression for the categorical dependent variable exposure to AMP. Zero exposure to AMP was treated as the reference category. This leaves us with two contrasts predicting the likelihood of occasional and frequent exposure to AMP in comparison to zero exposure (see Tables 2a and 2b).

Table 2a. Multinomial logistic regression model explaining occasional AMP exposure.

		95% CI for odds ratio		
	B (*SE*)	Lower	e^B	Upper
Intercept	−2.04 (0.24)***			
Political predictors				
AfD vote probability	0.19 (0.11)	0.98	1.21	1.50
Populist attitudes	−0.01 (0.11)	0.80	0.99	1.23
Personal relative deprivation	−0.25 (0.12)*	0.62	0.78	0.99
Collective relative deprivation	0.06 (0.13)	0.84	1.07	1.36
Media use predictors				
Tabloid newspapers	0.09 (0.10)	0.90	1.09	1.32
Quality newspapers	0.13 (0.10)	0.94	1.14	1.39
Private television	−0.08 (0.10)	0.75	0.92	1.13
Public television	0.01 (0.11)	0.81	1.00	1.23
Facebook	0.38 (0.09)***	1.22	1.47	1.76
Twitter	0.24 (0.09)**	1.07	1.27	1.51
Covariates				
Political left-right orientation	−0.08 (0.10)	0.75	0.92	1.13
Political extremism	0.01 (0.10)	0.84	1.01	1.21
Political interest	0.17 (0.11)	0.95	1.18	1.48
Age	−0.41 (0.10)***	0.55	0.67	0.82
Formal education (=university vs. lowest school degree)	0.12 (0.29)	0.65	1.13	1.99
Formal education (=Abitur vs. lowest school degree)	−0.22 (0.30)	0.45	0.80	1.43
Formal education (=middle vs. lowest school degree)	−0.31 (0.26)	0.44	0.73	1.23
Gender (=male vs. female)	0.57 (0.19)**	1.23	1.77	2.54

Notes: $n = 1346$. Cox & Snell $R^2 = .21$; Nagelkerke $R^2 = .26$. Model $\chi^2(36) = 307.54$, $p \leq .001$.
*$p \leq .05$; **$p \leq .01$; ***$p \leq .001$.

Table 2b. Multinomial logistic regression model explaining frequent AMP exposure.

		95% CI for odds ratio		
	B (*SE*)	Lower	e^B	Upper
Intercept	−2.55 (0.26)***			
Political predictors				
AfD vote probability	0.57 (0.09)***	1.48	1.78	2.13
Populist attitudes	0.24 (0.11)*	1.02	1.27	1.59
Personal relative deprivation	0.22 (0.11)*	1.00	1.25	1.55
Collective relative deprivation	−0.22 (0.12)	0.63	0.81	1.03
Media use predictors				
Tabloid newspapers	0.10 (0.10)	0.92	1.11	1.33
Quality newspapers	0.31 (0.10)***	1.13	1.37	1.65
Private television	−0.15 (0.10)	0.71	0.86	1.06
Public television	−0.17 (0.10)	0.69	0.85	1.04
Facebook	0.30 (0.09)***	1.12	1.34	1.61
Twitter	0.43 (0.08)***	1.31	1.53	1.80
Covariates				
Political left-right orientation	−0.07 (0.10)	0.77	0.94	1.13
Political extremism	−0.01 (0.09)	0.84	0.99	1.18
Political interest	0.13 (0.11)	0.92	1.14	1.41
Age	−0.26 (0.10)*	0.63	0.77	0.94
Formal education (=university vs. lowest school degree)	0.85 (0.30)**	1.30	2.34	4.21
Formal education (=Abitur vs. lowest school degree)	0.63 (0.31)*	1.03	1.88	3.43
Formal education (=middle vs. lowest school degree)	0.41 (0.27)	0.89	1.51	2.57
Gender (=male vs. female)	0.39 (0.18)*	1.04	1.47	2.09

Notes: $n = 1346$. Cox & Snell $R^2 = .21$; Nagelkerke $R^2 = .26$. Model $\chi^2(32) = 304.37$, $p \leq .001$.
*$p \leq .05$; **$p \leq .01$; ***$p \leq .001$.

Before being entered into the regression model all (quasi-)metric variables were z-standardized in order to increase comparability of effect sizes. After standardization, odd's ratio values indicate the increase or decrease in the likelihood of belonging to the

dependent group for an increase of one standard deviation from the mean of the predictor variable.

Results indicate that among the political predictors only personal relative deprivation significantly relates to occasional AMP exposure. However, the relationship is negative indicating that occasional AMP users feel less personally deprived than non-users. For frequent AMP exposure, a different picture emerges. Frequent AMP exposure is related to higher *AfD* vote probability (supporting H1), higher populist attitudes (supporting H2), and higher personal relative deprivation. Political orientation and collective relative deprivation do not significantly relate to neither occasional nor frequent AMP exposure.

H3 predicted that SNS use for political information relates to occasional AMP exposure. Essentially, results support this assumption. The use of Facebook as well as Twitter for political information are both comparably strong predictors of occasional AMP use. However, this is also true for frequent exposure to AMP. Differences between the two SNS can only be found in their relative importance. While occasional exposure more strongly relates to Facebook usage, frequent AMP users more heavily rely upon Twitter. Using traditional media outlets for political information is unrelated to occasional AMP exposure. However, frequent AMP users use quality newspapers more often for political information than the contrast group of non-users. For private and public television as well as tabloid newspapers, no patterns are observed.

Concerning, the covariates, male gender and lower age consistently predict occasional as well as frequent AMP exposure. However, age has a distinctly stronger relationship with occasional than with frequent exposure. When it comes to formal education individuals with no or the lowest German school degree ('Hauptschulabschluss') were used as the reference category. In comparison to this group no other school degree significantly predicts occasional AMP exposure. However, both the group with the highest school degree 'Abitur' and the group with a university degree have a significantly higher likelihood of frequent AMP exposure. Political left-right orientation, political extremism, and political interest turn out to be unrelated to AMP exposure.

Discussion

The present research has explored political and media use predictors of frequent and occasional exposure to alternative media with an affinity to populism (AMP) for political information. In doing so, this study is one of the rare contributions to the research literature on users of alternative media. With the continuous rise of political populism across the globe, alternative media which promote this thin-centered ideology are likely to experience increased attention from political communication research in the future (see, e.g., Bachl, 2018; Haller & Holt, 2018; Holt, 2017; Holt et al., 2019). The present research is able to provide insights into the audiences of AMP. More specifically, using a quota survey of German Internet users we have investigated how occasional and frequent AMP users differ from non-users in Germany. In line with our assumptions, the empirical results describe two different user groups.

Occasional users of AMP can hardly be characterized by a specific political leaning. Although the data reveal some tendencies towards populist attitudes and voting for *AfD*, these relationships are too small to reach statistical significance. Personal relative deprivation which has been linked to an affinity to political populism (Elchardus & Spruyt,

2016; Hameleers et al., 2018; Spruyt et al., 2016) was even negatively associated with occasional AMP exposure. Instead, occasional exposure to AMP was strongly related to using social networking sites (SNS) for political information. Both Facebook and Twitter use were important predictors of occasional AMP exposure. Moreover, younger age, which is an important factor in using social media for political information (Newman et al., 2018), was a much more powerful predictor for occasional than for frequent AMP exposure.

These findings can be interpreted in a way that occasional users of AMP are probably not intentionally seeking alternative political information with a populist slant. Rather, they could be incidentally exposed to such content via their SNS accounts as other users in their virtual social surroundings share, like, or comment the respective content. This stresses the notion that SNS as a technology could have helped populism gain momentum. More specifically, SNS seem to provide AMP outlets with access to parts of the audience that are not necessarily interested in their content by political conviction. This seems to be especially true for younger, male individuals who, as judged by our results, have a higher likelihood of occasionally using AMP. In the long run, occasional AMP exposure via SNS could therefore help increase the potential voter bases of populist parties and contribute to a populist societal polarization (Müller et al., 2017).

For frequent exposure to AMP, political predictors play a crucial role. *AfD* vote probability, populist attitudes, and personal relative deprivation were all related to frequent AMP exposure with *AfD* vote probability being one of the strongest among all predictors in the model. This speaks for frequent AMP use being a case of partisan selective exposure (Stroud, 2008) and indicates a strong link between AMP and the recent success of *AfD* in Germany. Different to voting for populist parties, frequent AMP exposure seems to be triggered by individualized feelings of societal ostracism rather than collective deprivation. This could be read as a hint that different to other, more participatory types of alternative media AMP might not construct a sense of collective action among its frequent users. However, additional research is necessary to shed more light upon this.

When it comes to their media diet, the data indicated that just as occasional AMP users also frequent users heavily rely upon SNS for political information. SNS seem to play an important role for any kind of AMP exposure. Besides, the media diet of frequent AMP users also differed from non-users in a way that they more frequently read quality newspapers. This varies from what is known about populist citizens' media use in general, which is coined by a strong affinity to entertaining political content from tabloids and private television stations (Hameleers et al., 2017; Schulz, 2019). Moreover, while populist citizens in general are older and have a lower formal education than non-populists, frequent AMP users were younger and better educated in this study.

One could now argue that different individuals within the sample are responsible for the different significant results. The significant results for education and quality newspaper use do not necessarily mean that the same individuals also agree with the populist ideology and vote for *AfD*. Instead, the AMP use of well-educated individuals could also be a case of intentional cross-cutting exposure for monitoring purposes. However, while a group of well-educated but not necessarily populist AMP users is likely to exist, it probably exists in small numbers. The quite robust relationships between frequent AMP use and education as well as quality newspaper use suggest that also among truly populist AMP frequent users, education and quality newspaper use are higher than average. This would

then indicate that frequent AMP users are a well-educated and information-oriented subgroup among populist citizens. In order to ultimately clarify this and differentiate between different user groups more insights into frequent AMP users underlying motives would be necessary.

Limitations and future research

There are, of course, limitations to the present study. First, we have only measured AMP exposure but not users' motives or evaluations of AMP content. Future research should use these variables to distinguish between different groups among the frequent AMP audience. This could help clarify whether populist users are simply accompanied by non-populist but highly educated users who read AMP for monitoring purposes or whether frequent AMP users are in fact a well-educated and information-oriented subgroup among populist citizens.

Second, we relied upon cross-sectional data for this study. The present design is not able to establish causality between AMP exposure and the predictor variables under consideration. It can for instance be expected that frequent AMP users are not only drawn to AMP because they hold strong populist attitudes but, vice versa, their populist attitudes might become stronger as a consequence of their frequent AMP exposure. The same applies for all other political as well as media use variables. Future studies using experimental or longitudinal designs will thus have to further explore the dynamics between AMP selection and effects.

Third, our findings are limited to Germany, a country where the AMP landscape has witnessed increasing audience attention in recent years alongside the growing success of the right-wing populist party *AfD*. In different national settings with varying media and political landscapes AMP users might be characterized by other attributes than in Germany. This calls for a replication of the present research in other national settings or with an internationally comparative perspective.

Fourth, we relied upon self-reported media use to determine frequent and occasional AMP users. Measuring media exposure via self-reports is very common in political communication research, yet, it can be afflicted with over-reporting bias (e.g., Prior, 2009). However, for AMP exposure this could be different. AMP users might be aware of the fact that they constitute a minority among the media audience with views that are often discussed as breaking the norm (Herkman, 2015). Thus, there could also be a social desirability bias that leads to under- rather than over-reporting of AMP exposure. This question should be addressed by future methodological research that compares self-reports of AMP exposure with users' log-fila data.

Finally, for the present research we had to classify media outlets as featuring a populist slant based on previous analysis and traces of information from different sources. There is yet no systematic content analysis of the German alternative media landscape that would allow for an unequivocal classification of outlets. This is an urgent gap in the research landscape, not only for Germany but also for many other countries. It could be argued that using 'AMP' as a label downplays the strong exclusionist and nationalist agenda of some of the outlets under consideration. However, a clear right-wing stance cannot necessarily be found among all AMP that were studied in this article. Nevertheless, this should not lead to neglecting the differences between more and less right-wing extremist AMP outlets.

Conclusion

Despite these limitations, the present research has demonstrated that AMP are an important factor in the current political communication landscape and that studying their users contributes to explain the recent success of political populism. Our results indicated that almost a third of German Internet users is regularly exposed to at least one AMP outlet and that SNS use for political information increases the likelihood for this. Furthermore, we found that frequent AMP users feel individually, but not collectively deprived, hold stronger populist attitudes, and have a high likelihood of voting for right-wing populist *AfD*. Interestingly, no such patterns could be observed for occasional AMP users who even reported less personal relative deprivation than non-users.

Taken together, these findings suggest that (1) AMP are important information sources for individuals with strong populist convictions and (2) SNS might help them gain attention beyond this core group. This adds to a large body of research stressing the importance of social media for the recent wave of populism across the globe (Alvares & Dahlgren, 2016; Ernst et al., 2017; Krämer, 2017). Not only do SNS provide populist leaders with a direct communication channel to the electorate they also pave the way for accompanying alternative media outlets which support the populist message with a seemingly independent voice. This calls for future research on AMP, its audiences, and its relations to SNS and political populism.

Disclosure statement

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Appendix 1. Items measuring populist attitudes, personal relative deprivation, and collective relative deprivation

Item	*M* (SD)
Populist attitudes	
MPs in Parliament very quickly lose touch with ordinary people	5.57 (1.41)
The differences between ordinary people and the ruling elite are much greater than the differences between ordinary people	5.39 (1.58)
People like me have no influence on what the government does	4.68 (1.88)
Politicians talk too much and take too little action	5.73 (1.46)
The people should have the final say on the most important political issues by voting on them directly in referendums	5.37 (1.77)
The people should be asked whenever important decisions are taken	5.50 (1.69)
The people, not the politicians, should make our most important policy decisions	4.97 (1.81)
The politicians in Parliament need to follow the will of the people	5.66 (1.48)
Ordinary people all pull together	3.56 (1.77)
Ordinary people are of good and honest character	3.96 (1.78)
Ordinary people share the same values and interests	4.05 (1.70)
Although the Germans are very different from each other, when it comes down to it they all think the same	3.82 (1.77)
Personal relative deprivation	
I, personally, never get what I in fact deserve	3.27 (1.90)
I, personally, do not thrive in Germany	2.99 (1.91)
My whole living conditions are really poor	2.72 (1.82)
Collective relative deprivation	
Whichever way you look at it, people like me never get what they in fact deserve in this society	4.33 (1.89)
In this society, people like me work really hard and do not receive anything in return	4.42 (1.89)
People like me are never spared in this society	4.23 (1.81)

Notes: $n = 1346$. All items were measured on a seven-step scale from 1 = do not agree at all to 7 = fully agree.

Appendix B : Selbstständigkeitserklärung

Universität Zürich[UZH]

Philosophische Fakultät
Studiendekanat

Universität Zürich
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Studiendekanat
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www.phil.uzh.ch

Erklärung

Hiermit erkläre ich, dass die Dissertation von mir selbst ohne unerlaubte Beihilfe verfasst worden ist und diese Dissertation noch an keiner anderen Fakultät eingereicht wurde.

Ort und Datum Unterschrift

Zürich, 19.02.13 A Sch

Appendix C : Eigenständigkeitserklärung

Erbrachte Eigenleistung bei Gemeinschaftspublikationen

Ausweis der erbrachten Eigenleistung bei Gemeinschaftspublikationen gemäss §7 Absatz 3 der Promotionsverordnung der Philosophischen Fakultät der Universität Zürich vom 8. Juli 2009.

Article I: **Schulz, A.**, Müller, P., Schemer, C., Wirz, D. S., Wettstein, M., & Wirth, W. (2017). Measuring Populist Attitudes on Three Dimensions. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research.* Advance online publication. doi:10.1093/ijpor/edw037

Als Erstautorin dieser Publikation habe ich bei jedem der zur Veröffentlichung notwendigen Arbeitsschritte massgeblich mitgewirkt. Das betrifft die konzeptionelle Vorarbeit (Definition von Subkonstrukten, Entwicklung von Items für den Fragebogen), die Durchführung der Befragungsstudie (Fragebogen aufsetzen, Monitoring der Feldarbeit), die Datenauswertung, die Verschriftlichung von Theorie und Ergebnissen sowie die koordinative und inhaltliche Arbeit im Rahmen des Reviewprozesses.

Die Co-Autoren haben die konzeptionelle Arbeit massgeblich begleitet und vorangetrieben und im Rahmen der Datenanalyse beratend zur Seite gestanden. Ferner wurde das von mir verfasste Manuskript von allen Co-Autoren gelesen, kommentiert und auf diesem Weg in seine finale Form gebracht. Auch im Rahmen des Reviewprozesses haben alle Co-Autoren an den Revisionen mitgewirkt.

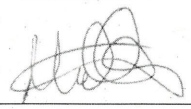
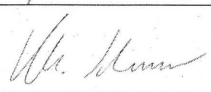
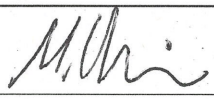
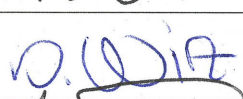
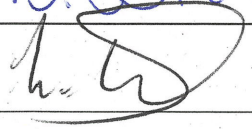
Article II: **Schulz, A.**, Wirth, W. & Müller, P. (2018). We are the People and You are Fake News. A Social Identity Approach to Populist Citizens' Hostile Media and False Consensus Perceptions. *Communication Research, 12*, 1-26. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650218794854

Als Erstautorin dieser Publikation habe ich ich bei jedem der zur Veröffentlichung notwendigen Arbeitsschritte massgeblich mitgewirkt. Dies betrifft die theoretische (Konzeption) und analytische Arbeit (Datenerhebung, Datenauswertung), die Verschriftlichung von Theorie und Ergebnissen sowie die koordinative und inhaltliche Arbeit im Rahmen des Communication Research Reviewprozesses.

Die Co-Autoren haben die konzeptionelle Arbeit massgeblich begleitet und vorangetrieben und im Rahmen der Datenanalyse beratend zur Seite gestanden. Ferner wurde das von mir verfasste Manuskript von allen Co-Autoren gelesen, kommentiert und auf diesem Weg in seine finale Form gebracht. Auch im Rahmen des Reviewprozesses haben alle Co-Autoren an den Revisionen mitgewirkt.

Article IV: Müller, P. & **Schulz, A.** (under review). Who Uses Anti-Elitist Alternative Media? Exploring Predictors of Occasional and Frequent Exposure. *Information, Communication & Society.*

Als Zweitautorin dieser Publikation habe ich bei den wesentlichen zur Veröffentlichung notwendigen Arbeitsschritten massgeblich mitgewirkt. Dies betrifft die theoretische (Konzeption) und analytische Arbeit (Datenerhebung). Die Verschriftlichung der Arbeit erfolgte in enger Zusammenarbeit mit dem Erstautor, der hier jeweils Entwürfe vorschlug, die von mir kommentiert und überarbeitet wurden. Im Falle einzelner Unterkapitel erfolgte diese Arbeitsaufteilung auch umgekehrt.

	Ort, Datum	Unterschrift
Philipp Müller	Mainz, 28.02.2019	
Christian Schemer	Mainz, 28.02.2019	
Martin Wettstein	Zürich, 28.2.2019	
Dominique Wirz	Zürich, 28.2.19	
Werner Wirth	Zürich, 28.2.2019	

Appendix D : Curriculum Vitae

Curriculum Vitae

Anne Schulz, M.A.

Contact

University of Zurich
Department of Media and Communication Research (IKMZ)
Division of Media Psychology & Effects
Andreasstrasse 15
CH-8050 Zürich

+41 (0)78 6911987
a.schulz@ikmz.uzh.ch

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-0456-6661

Research Interests

Political Communication, Media Perceptions, Media Effects, Populism

Academic Education

2014 – present	PhD Student in the Program "Democracy Studies" at the Department of Media and Communication Research (IKMZ), Division of Media Psychology & Effects, University of Zurich, Switzerland (Prof. Dr. Werner Wirth)
	Thesis (2019, February): *"Populist Citizens' Media Perceptions and Media Use in Western Democracies"*
2011 – 2014	Master of Arts in Communication Science (Major), Sociology (Minor), and Psychology (Minor). University of Zurich, Switzerland
	Thesis (2013): *All Hostile Media. Group Membership, In-Group Identification and Consonance of News Reporting as Moderators of the Hostile Media Effect*
2010 – 2011	Science de l'Éducation, Université de Picardie Jules Vernes, Amiens, France (Erasmus)
2007 – 2011	Bachelor of Arts in Communication Science (Major) and Psychology (Minor). University of Erfurt, Germany.
	Thesis (2010): *Eine theoretische Neujustierung der Theorie der öffentlichen Meinung im Internet-Zeitalter* [A theoretical Adjustment of the Spiral of Silence Theory in the Digital Age]

Academic Employment

2013 – present	Research & Teaching Assistant at the Department of Communication and Media Research, Division of Media Psychology & Effects, University of Zurich, Switzerland (Prof. Dr. Werner Wirth) Employed in the NCCRdemocracy Phase III Project *"A look into the back box – how populist communication strategies affect citizens' attitudes"* funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (www.nccr-democracy.uzh.ch)
2011 – 2013	Student Research & Teaching Assistant at the Department of Communication and Media Research, University of Zurich, Switzerland - Courses: Multivariate Statistics (Prof. Dr. Werner Wirth); Introduction to Communication Science (Dr. Michael Brüggemann) - Projects: IKMZ Graduate Survey (Prof. Dr. Werner Wirth); NCCRdemocracy Phase II (Prof. Dr. Werner Wirth)
2009	Student Accreditor in a Higher Education Accreditation Committee at the University of Passau, Germany
2008 – 2011	Student Research & Teaching Assistant at the Department for Communication Science, University of Erfurt, Germany - Course: Summer School (Prof. Dr. Patrick Rössler) - Projects: Skalenhandbuch, Neue Linie, Griffelkunst, etc. (Prof. Dr. Patrick Rössler)

Non-Academic Employment

2011	Internship at *Goldmedia Strategy Consulting*, Berlin, Germany
2009	Internship at *ZDF* [Second German Television], Mainz, Germany
2007	Freelance Journalist at *Märkische Allgemeine Zeitung*, Nauen, Germany

Awards

2018	**Kaid-Sanders Best Political Communication Article of the Year Award** for the article Müller, P., Schemer, C., Wettstein, M., **Schulz, A.**, Wirz, D. S., Engesser, S., & Wirth, W. (2017). The Polarizing Impact of News Coverage on Populist Attitudes in the Public. Evidence From a Panel Study in Four European Democracies. *Journal of Communication*, *67*(6), 968–992.
2018	**Best paper award** of the annual conference of the "Communication & Politics" division for the German Communication Association (DGPuK)
2017	**Best paper award** of the annual conference of the „Media Reception and Effects" division for the German Communication Association (DGPuK)
2011	**Best paper award** of the annual conference of the „Media Reception and Effects" division for the German Communication Association (DGPuK)

Publications

Journal Articles (peer reviewed)

12. Bos, L., Schemer, C., Corbu, N., Hameleers, M., Andreadis, I., **Schulz, A.**, Schmuck, D., Reinemann, C. & Fawzi, N. (in press). The Effects of Populism as a Social Identity Frame on Persuasion and Mobilization. *European Journal of Political Research.*

11. Wirz, D.S., Wettstein, M., **Schulz, A.**, Ernst, N., Schemer, C. & Wirth, W. (in press). How populist crisis rhetoric affects voters in Switzerland. *Studies in Communication Science.*

10. Wettstein, M., Esser, F., Buechel, F., Wirz, D.S., **Schulz, A.**, Ernst, N., Engesser, S., Müller, P., Schemer, C. & Wirth, W. (2018). What Drives Populist Styles? Analyzing Immigration and Labor Market News in 11 Countries. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1177/1077699018805408

9. **Schulz, A.**, Wirth, W. & Müller, P. (2018). We are the People and You are Fake News: A Social Identity Approach to Populist Citizens' False Consensus and Hostile Media Perceptions. *Communication Research.* Advance online publication. doi:10.1177/0093650218794854

8. **Schulz, A.** (2018). Where Populist Citizens get the News: An Investigation of News Audience Polarization along Populist Attitudes in Eleven Countries. *Communication Monographs.* Advance online publication. doi:10.1080/03637751.2018.1508876

7. Wirz, D. S., Wettstein, M., **Schulz, A.**, Müller, P., Schemer, C., Ernst, N., Esser, F. & Wirth, W. (2018). The Effects of Right-Wing Populist Communication on Emotions and Cognitions toward Immigrants. *The International Journal of Press/Politics.* Advance online publication. doi:10.1177/1940161218788956

6. Wettstein, M., Esser, F., **Schulz, A.**, Wirz, D. S. & Wirth, W. (2018). News Media as Gatekeepers, Critics and Initiators of Populist Communication: How Journalists in Ten Countries Deal with the Populist Challenge. *The International Journal of Press/Politics.* Advance online publication. doi:10.1177/1940161218785979

5. Hameleers, M., Bos, L., Fawzi, N., Reinemann, C., Andreadis, I., Corbu, N., Schemer, C., **Schulz, A.**, Sheafer, T., Aalberg, T., Axelsson, S., Berganza, R., Cremonesi, C., Dahlberg, S., Vreese, C. H. de, Hess, A., Kartsounidou, E., Kasprowicz, D., Matthes, J., Negrea-Busuioc, E., Ringdal, s., Salgado, S., Sanders, K., Schmuck, D., Strömbäck, J., Suiter, J., Boomgarden, H., Tenenboim-Weinblatt, K. & Weiss-Yaniv, N. (2018). Start Spreading the News: A Comparative Experiment on the Effects of Populist Communication on Political Engagement in Sixteen European Countries. *The International Journal of Press/Politics.* Advance online publication. doi:10.1177/1940161218786786

4. Schemer, C., Wirth, W., Wettstein, M., Müller, P., **Schulz, A.** & Wirz, D. S. (2018). Wirkung populistischer Kommunikation. Populismus in den Medien, Wirkungen und deren Randbedingungen. *Communicatio Socialis, 51*(2), 118-130.

3. Müller, P., Schemer, C., Wettstein, M., **Schulz, A.**, Wirz, D. S., Engesser, S., & Wirth, W. (2017). The Polarizing Impact of News Coverage on Populist Attitudes in the Public. Evidence From a Panel Study in Four European Democracies. *Journal of Communication*, *67*(6), 968–992. doi:10.1111/jcom.12337

2. **Schulz, A.**, Müller, P., Schemer, C., Wirz, D. S., Wettstein, M., & Wirth, W. (2017). Measuring Populist Attitudes on Three Dimensions. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research.* Advance online publication. doi:10.1093/ijpor/edw037

1. **Schulz, A.**, & Rössler, P. (2012). The Spiral of Silence and the Internet. Selection of Online Content and the Perception of the Public Opinion Climate in Computer-Mediated Communication Environments. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, *24*(3), 346–367. doi:10.1093/ijpor/eds022

Books

1. **Schulz, A.**, & Rössler, P. (2013). *Schweigespirale Online. Die Theorie der öffentlichen Meinung und das Internet* [Spiral of Silence Online. The Theory of Public Opinion and the Internet]. Baden-Baden: Nomos.

Working Paper

2. Wirth, W., Esser, F., Wettstein, M., Engesser, S., Wirz, D. S., **Schulz, A.**,. . . Schemer, C. (2016). *The Appeal of Populist Ideas, Strategies, and Styles. A Theoretical Model and Research Design for Analyzing Populist Political Communication.* NCCR Working Paper No. 88. Retrieved from NCCR democracy 21 website: http://www.nccr-democracy.uzh.ch/publications/workingpaper/pdf/wp_88.pdf

1. Wirth, W., Schemer, C., **Schulz, A.**, Wettstein, M., Wirz, D., & Müller, P. (2016). *A Multi-Dimensional Measure to Assess Populist Attitudes in the Public in Eight Languages.* NCCR Working Paper No. 87. Retrieved from NCCR democracy 21 website: http://www.nccr-democracy.uzh.ch/publications/workingpaper/wp87

Book Chapters / Encyclopedia Entries

4. **Schulz, A.** (2017). *Research Method Selection*. In J. Matthes (Ed.), The Wiley Blackwell-ICA international encyclopedias of communication. The International Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods (pp. 1–2). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. doi:10.1002/9781118901731.iecrm0213

3. Rössler, P., & **Schulz, A.** (2014). Public Opinion Expression in Online Environments. In W. Donsbach, C. T. Salmon, & Y. Tsfati (Eds.), *The Spiral of Silence: New Perspectives on Communication and Public Opinion* (pp. 101–118). New York, NY: Routledge.

2. Rössler, P., **Schulz, A.**, & Mewes, M. (2012). Kumulation, Konsonanz und Netzwerkeffekte. Noelle-Neumanns Theorie der Öffentlichen Meinung unter Online-Bedingungen: Ansätze zu einer theoretischen Rejustierung der 'Schweigespirale' im Lichte des 'Social Web' [Cumulation, Consonance and Networkeffects. Noelle-Neumanns's Spiral of Silence Theory Online: A Readjustment Approach]. In O. Jandura, A. Fahr, & H.-B. Brosius (Eds.), *Reihe Rezeptionsforschung: Vol. 25. Theorieanpassungen in der digitalen Medienwelt* (1st ed., pp. 85–104). Baden-Baden: Nomos.

1. **Schulz, A.** (2012). Schweigespirale Online - Virtuelle Referenzgruppen in der Theorie der öffentlichen Meinung [Spiral of Silence Online - Digital Referencegroups in the Spiral of Silence Theory]. In S. Appenzeller, F. Flemming, & L. Küpper (Eds.), *Düsseldorfer Forum Politische Kommunikation: v.2. Bürgerproteste im Spannungsfeld von Politik und Medien: Beiträge zur 7. Fachtagung des DFPK* (pp. 85–104). Berlin: Frank & Timme.

Presentations

Competitive Conference Presentations (*full paper)

33.* **Schulz, A.** & Wirth, W. (2019, May). Populist Citizens' News Choice: A Selective Exposure Study on the Extent of and Motivation behind Populist Citizens' Pro- and Counterattitudinal News Exposure. Presentation at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association (ICA), Washington, DC.

32.* Müller, P. & **Schulz, A.** (2019, May). Who Uses Anti-Elitist Alternative Media? Exploring Predictors of Occasional and Frequent Exposure. Presentation at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association (ICA), Washington, DC.

31. **Schulz, A.** & Wirth, W. (2019, January). Selecting Fake News. Eine Untersuchung der Nachrichtenselektion populistischer Bürger. [Selecting Fake News. An Investigation of populist citizens news selection]. Presentation at the annual meeting of the Media Reception and Effects division of the German Communication Association (DGPuK), Mainz, Germany.

30. Müller, P. & **Schulz, A.** (2018, November). *Corrective Actions or Political Claims? Determinants of Audience Members' Reactions to the 'Fake News' Debate.* Presentation at the 7th ECREA conference, Lugano, Switzerland.

29. **Schulz, A.** & Wirz, D. S. (2018, November). *Populist Citizens' Willingness to speak out in 4 Countries.* Presentation at the 7th ECREA conference, Lugano, Switzerland.

28.* **Schulz, A.** (2018, May). *Populist Citizens' Media Use in Eleven Countries.* Presentation at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association (ICA), Prague, CZ.

27.* Hameleers, M., Bos, L., Fawzi, N., Reinemann, C. E., Andreadis, I., Corbu, N., Schemer, C., Shaefer, T., Aalberg, T., Axelsson, S., Balas, D.C., Berganza, R., Cremonesi, C., Dahlberg, S., Hess, A., Kartsounidou, E., Kasprowicz, D., Negrea-Busuioc, E., Ringdal, S., Salgado, S., Sanders, K., Schmuck, D., **Schulz, A.**, Stepinska, A. M., Suiter, J., Tenenboim-Weinblatt, K. & Weiss, N. (2018, May). *Start Spreading the News: A Comparative Experiment on the Effects of Populist Communication on Political Participation in 16 European Countries.* Presentation at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association (ICA), Prague, CZ.

26.* Wettstein, M., Esser, F., **Schulz, A.**, Wirz, D. S. & Wirth, W. (2018, May). T*he News Media as Gatekeepers, Critics and Originators of Populist Communication.* Presentation at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association (ICA), Prague, CZ.

25.* Wirz, D. S., **Schulz, A.**, Schemer, C., Müller, P., Ernst, N., Esser, F. & Wirth, W. (2018, May). *How Right-Wing Populist Communication Influences Cognitions and Emotions toward Immigrants: Evidence from a Cross-National Panel-Survey*. Presentation at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association (ICA), Prague, CZ.

24. Wirz, D. S., **Schulz, A.** (2018, March). COST, Madrid, Spain.

23. Wirz, D. S., **Schulz, A.**, Wettstein, M., Ernst, N., Schemer, C., Müller, P. & Wirth, W. (2018, January). *Populistische Krisen-Rhetorik: Wie Emotionalisierung und Dramatisierung von populistischen Inhalten deren Wirkung verstärkt.* [The populist Crisis-Rhetoric: How Emotionalization and Dramatization amplify the Effects of populist Communication] Presentation at the annual meeting of the Communication and Politics division of the German Communication Association (DGPuK), Fribourg, Switzerland.

22. **Schulz, A.** (2017, November). *Media Exposure in Spite of Media Distrust: Populist Citizens' Reactions to Hostile News.* Presentation at the ECREA's Political Communication Section Interim Conference, Zurich, Switzerland.

21. Schemer, C., Müller, P., Wettstein, M., **Schulz, A.**, Wirz, D. S., & Wirth, W. (2017, July). *The Effects of Populist Communication in the News on Populist Attitudes in the Public.* Presentation at the 40th Annual Scientific Meeting of the International Society of Political Psychology (ISPP), Edinburgh, Scotland.

20.* **Schulz, A.** (2017, June). *The Populist's Worldview. How Populist Citizens Perceive Mainstream Media and Public Opinion.* Presentation at the Final Conference of the NCCR Democracy "Challenges to Democracy in the 21st Century", Zurich, Switzerland.

19.* Müller, P., Schemer, C., Wettstein, M., **Schulz, A.**, Wirz, D., & Wirth, W. (2017, May). *The Polarizing Impact of News Coverage on Populist Attitudes in the Public. Evidence from a Panel Study in four European Democracies.* Presentation at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association (ICA), San Diego/CA, USA.*

18.* **Schulz, A.**, Wirth, W., Wettstein, M., Wirz, D., & Müller, P. (2017, May). *The Populist's Worldview. How Populist Citizens Perceive Mainstream Media and Public Opinion.* Presentation at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association (ICA), San Diego/CA, USA.*

17. **Schulz, A.**, Wirth, W., Wirz, D. S., Wettstein, M., Müller, P., & Schemer, C. (2017, January). *Die populistische Weltanschauung: Wie Anhänger populistischer Ideen die Medien und das öffentliche Meinungsklima wahrnehmen* [The Populist's Worldview. How Populist Citizens Perceive Mainstream Media and Public Opinion]. Presentation at the annual meeting of the Media Reception and Effects division of the German Communication Association (DGPuK), Erfurt, Germany.

16. Ernst, N., Wirz, D. S., **Schulz, A.**, & Engesser, S. (2016, June). *Populist Communication Strategies in News Media in Four European Democracies.* Presentation at the Preconference "Populism in, by, and against the Media" of the annual meeting of the International Communication Association (ICA), Fukuoka, Japan.

15. **Schulz, A.**, Wettstein, M., Müller, P., Wirz, D., Schemer, C., & Wirth, W. (2016, June). *News Media Use and Populist Attitudes. Is There an Unholy Alliance?* Presentation at the Preconference "Populism in, by, and against the Media" of the annual meeting of the International Communication Association (ICA), Fukuoka, Japan.

14. Schemer, C., **Schulz, A.**, Müller, P., Wirz, D., Wettstein, M., & Wirth, W. (2016, April). *Validation of a Populist Attitudes Measure for Public Opinion Surveys.* Presentation at the 5th COST Joint Management Committee & Working Group Meeting, Cracow, Poland.

13. **Schulz, A.**, Müller, P., Wirz, D., Wettstein, M., Schemer, C., & Wirth, W. (2015, August). *Measuring Populist Attitudes as a Multidimensional Concept.* Presentation at the annual convention of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR), Montreal, Canada.

12. **Schulz, A.**, Wettstein, M., & Wirth, W. (2015, May). D*er Induktionsschluss beim Publikum: Empirische Evidenz für die Extrapolationshypothese im Persuasive Press Inference Modell.* [Empirical Evidence for the Extrapolation Hypotheses of the Persuasive Press Inference Model]. Presentation at the annual meeting of the German Communication Association (DGPuK), Darmstadt, Germany.

11. Wirz, D., Wettstein, M., **Schulz, A.**, Müller, P., Schemer, C., & Wirth, W. (2015, January). *Die unbeabsichtigte Komplizenschaft von Populisten und Boulevardmedien. Wirkung populistischer Appelle auf Zeitungsleser* [The unintentional Complicity between Populists and Tabloid Media. Effects of Populist Communication on Newspaper Audiences]. Presentation at the annual meeting of the Media Reception and Effects division of the German Communication Association (DGPuK), Bamberg, Germany.

10.* Wirz, D. S., Ernst, N., Büchel, F., **Schulz, A.**, Wettstein, M., Engesser, S.,. . . Wirth, W. (2014, May). *Populism and the Media Forming an Unholy Alliance: An Integrative Framework.* Presentation at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association (ICA), Seattle/WA, USA.

9.* **Schulz, A.**, Wettstein, M., & Wirth, W. (2014, May). *All Hostile Media. Consonance of News Reporting as Moderator of the Hostile Media Effect.* Presentation at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association (ICA), Seattle/WA, USA.

8. **Schulz, A.**, Dingerkus, F., Wettstein, M., & Wirth, W. (2014, January). *Konsonanz und Hostile Media Effekt: Eine experimentelle Untersuchung der Wirkung von Konsonanz auf feindliche Medienrezeption am Beispiel des Konflikts zwischen Schulmedizinern und Homöopathen.* [Consonance and the Hostile Media Effect. An Experimental Test of the Effects of Consonance on Hostile Media Perceptions]. Presentation at the annual meeting of the Media Reception and Effects division of the German Communication Association (DGPuK), Hannover, Germany.

7.* Rössler, P., & **Schulz, A.** (2012, May). *The Spiral of Silence and the Internet: Selection of Online Content and the Perception of the Public Opinion Climate in Computer-Mediated Communication Environments.* Presentation at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association (ICA), Phoenix/AZ, USA.

6. Rössler, P. & **Schulz, A.** (2012, May). *The Spiral of Silence and the Internet Age: Challenges, Modifications, Limitations.* Presentation at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association (ICA), Phoenix/AZ, USA.

5. Rössler, P., & **Schulz, A.** (2011, September). V*om Hasen Medienentwicklung, dem Igel Medienforschung und der Schnecke Methodenentwicklung. Oder: Sinn und Wahnsinn von Standardisierung am Beispiel eines Skalenhandbuchs für die Kommunikationswissenschaft.* [About the Challenges to standardize Measures in

Communication Science]. Presentation at the annual meeting of the Methods division of the German Communication Association (DGPuK), Hannover, Germany.

4. **Schulz, A.** (2011, June). *Auf der Suche nach einem virtuellen Eisenbahnabteil. Die Theorie der öffentlichen Meinung vor dem Hintergrund computervermittelter Kommunikation.* [Searching for the digital Train Compartment. The Spiral of Silence Theory in computer-mediated Communication]. Posterpresentation at the "Nachwuchskolloquium für politische Kommunikation" (NapoKo), Dresden, Germany.

3. Rössler, P., & **Schulz, A.** (2011, June). *Reden und Schweigen in Subspiralen. Öffentliche Meinung zwischen Differenzierung und Integration: Zum Erklärungswert von Noelle-Neumanns Theorie in der Praxis des ‚Social Web'.* [Speaking and Silence in Subspirals: Public Opinion in between Differentiation and Integration]. Presentation at the annual meeting of the German Communication Association (DGPuK), Dortmund, Germany.

2. **Schulz, A.** (2011, April). *Schweigespirale online. Social Media und die neue Rolle von Referenzgruppen in der Theorie der öffentlichen Meinung* [Spiral of Silence Online: Social Media and the new Role of Referencegroups within the Theory of Public Opinion]. Presentation at the Düsseldorfer Forum für politische Kommunikation (DFPK), Düsseldorf, Germany.

1. Rössler, P., **Schulz, A.**, & Mewes, M. (2011, January). *Kumulation, Konsonanz und Netzwerkeffekte. Noelle-Neumanns Theorie der Öffentlichen Meinung unter Online-Bedingungen: Ansätze zu einer theoretischen Rejustierung der Schweigespirale im Lichte des 'Social Web'.* [Cumulation, Consonance and Networkeffects. Noelle-Neumanns's Spiral of Silence Theory Online: A Readjustment Approach]. Presentation at the annual meeting of the Media Reception and Effects division of the German Communication Association (DGPuK), Munich, Germany.

Invited Talks

5. **Schulz, A.** (2018, November). *We are the People and you are Fake News: Populist Citizens' Public Opinion and Media Perceptions.* Invited Lecture at the Faculté des sciences sociales et politiques. University of Lausanne, Switzerland.

4. **Schulz, A.** (2018, June). *Measuring Populism across Nations: An Inventory of Populist Attitudes.* Presentation. Workshop on «Populist Attitudes in a Comparative Perspective» at Bamberg Graduate School of Social Sciences, Bamberg, Germany.

3. **Schulz, A.**, & Wirz, D. S. (2017, October). *Die Untersuchung von Populismus in der Medienpsychologie. Forschungsfragen, Ergebnisse und Herausforderungen* [The Investigation of Populism in Media Psychology. Research Questions, Results, and Challenges]. Ikmb Research Colloquium hosted by Prof. Dr. Silke Adam, University of Bern, Switzerland.

2. **Schulz, A.** (2017, September). *Populismus, Medien und Konflikte* [Populism, Media, and Conflicts]. Presentation. Workshop on "Media in Times of Conflict" at the Schader-Stiftung, Darmstadt, Germany.

1. **Schulz, A.**, & Wirz, D. S. (2015, January). *Populism in the Context of Globalization and Mediatization.* Presentation at the COST network workshop "New Perspectives on Populist Political Communication", Zurich, Switzerland.

Research Collaborations

- Dr. Linda Bos & Dr. Michael Hameleers (University of Amsterdam) Research on Populism (ongoing)
- Prof. Dr. Marco Steenbergen (University of Zurich) Research on Populism (ongoing)
- Prof. Dr. Christian Schemer & Dr. Philipp Müller (University of Mainz). Research on populism (ongoing)
- Prof. Dr. Werner Wirth (University of Zurich). Research on media perceptions and populism (ongoing).
- Prof. Dr. Patrick Rössler (University of Erfurt). Research on the Spiral of Silence (four publications).

Service to Profession

Conference Activity

2015 **Organization** of a panel on "Populist Attitudes in Contemporary Democracies" for the annual meeting of the ECPR General Conference, Montréal, Canada.

2014 **Organization** of a panel on "The Appeal of Populist Ideas and Messages. Understanding Populism in the Context of De-Nationalization and Mediatization" for the annual meeting of the International Communication Association (ICA), Seattle/WA, USA.

2012 **Organization** of a panel on "Noelle-Neumann's Theory of Public Opinion in the Digital Age: New Directions in Theory and Methodology" for the annual meeting of the International Communication Association (ICA),

Ad-hoc Reviewer

Journals: Political Behavior (2); New Media & Society (1); American Political Science Review (1); Communication Monographs (1); International Political Science Review (1); American Political Science Review (1)

Conferences: European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA); European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR); International Communication Association (ICA); German Communication Association (DGPuK)

Departmental and University Service

2017 – ongoing	IKMZ Social Media Management as well as Website Management for the IKMZ Media Psychology and Effects Division
2011 – 2013	Student Representative at the Department of Communication and Media Research, University of Zurich, Switzerland (student member of the faculty committee, department committee, appellate committee)
2007 – 2009	Student Representative at the Department for Communication Science, University of Erfurt, Germany (speaker, student member of the faculty committee)

Memberships

European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA)
Section: Political Communication

Swiss Association of Communication and Media Research (SACM)
Division: Audience, Media Reception, and Effects

Working Group "*Citizens and Populism*" (chaired by Prof. Dr. Carsten E. Reinemann) of the COST Action "*Populist Political Communication in Europe*" (chaired by Prof. Dr. Toril Aalberg).

Young scholar network of the Media Reception and Effects division of the German Communication Association (DGPuK: NaRezFo)

International Communication Association (ICA)
Divisions: Political Communication, Journalism

German Communication Association (DGPuK)
Divisions: Media Reception & Effects; Methods; Communication & Politics; Digital Communication

Teaching

Fall 2018	**MA Lecture:** Multivariate Analyseverfahren [Multivariate Statistics] with Dominique S. Wirz
Spring 2018	**BA Seminar:** Populismus und Medien: Nutzungs- und Wirkungsaspekte [Populism and the Media: Media Use & Effects Research] with Dominique. S. Wirz
Fall 2017	**MA Lecture:** Multivariate Analyseverfahren [Multivariate Statistics] with Werner Wirth and Dominique S. Wirz
Spring 2017	**BA Seminar:** Schönheitsideale im TV [Body Images on TV] with Dominique S. Wirz
Fall 2016	**MA Lecture:** Multivariate Analyseverfahren [Multivariate Statistics] with Werner Wirth and Dominique S. Wirz
Spring 2016	**BA Seminar:** Schönheitsideale im TV [Body Images on TV] with Dominique S. Wirz
Fall 2015	**MA Lecture:** Multivariate Analyseverfahren [Multivariate Statistics] with Werner Wirth
Spring 2015	**BA Research Seminar:** Durch welche Brille schaust du? Die verzerrte Wahrnehmung von Medieninhalten II [Media Bias Perceptions] with Katharina Sommer
Fall 2014	**BA Research Seminar:** Durch welche Brille schaust du? Die verzerrte Wahrnehmung von Medieninhalten I [Media Bias Perceptions] with Katharina Sommer

Supervised Bachelor Theses
at the Department of Communication and Media Research, University of Zurich, Switzerland

13. Caduff, M. (2015). *Reden oder Schweigen? Wie sich Isolationsfurcht und Schüchternheit allgemein und bei einem feindlich wahrgenommenen Meinungsklima auf die Redebereitschaft auswirken.*

12. Hauri, A. & Signer, E. (2015). *Das Schweigen der Skeptiker: Medienskeptizismus und die Redebereitschaft in der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchung anhand des HME, des IPMI und der Schweigespirale.*

11. Erdal, B. & Holenstein, J. (2015). *Der Einfluss des affektiven Involvements auf den Hostile-Media-Effekt. Rolle und Relevanz von Emotionen in der feindlichen Wahrnehmung von Medieninhalten.*

10. Lareida, L. (2015). *Hostile Media Effekt am Beispiel Islam in der Schweiz. Eine empirische Studie über den Einfluss der eigenen Meinung und dem Medienskeptizismus auf die feindliche Medienwahrnehmung.*

9. Cuk, M. & Marfurt, J. (2015). *Dico, ergo sum. Weshalb, wann und wo wir sprechen.*

8. Milz, V. (2015). *Schweigespirale & Offenheit. Der Einfluss von Offenheit für neue Erfahrungen auf den Prozess der Schweigespirale.*

7. Rubeli, D. (2015). *Der Einfluss des Third-Person-Effekt in der Schweigespirale: Eine empirische Untersuchung der Berichterstattungswahrnehmung über den Islam in der Schweiz.*

6. Strahm, E. (2015). *Der Hostile Media Effekt. Der Einfluss von Involvement, Reichweite und Glaubwürdigkeit.*

5. Betschart, L. & Thürlemann, M. (2015). *Medienmeinung oder Peer-Group Meinung? Ein Test der Einflüsse auf die Redebereitschaft.*

4. Wegner, J. & Witzig, S. (2015). *Reden oder Schweigen? Wie sich Selbstbewusstsein und Introversion auf die Redebereitschaft bei einem feindlich wahrgenommenen Meinungsklima auswirken.*

3. Furrer, C. & Wepfer, J. (2015). *Die Rolle von Involvement bei der Wahrnehmung der öffentlichen Meinung.*

2. Britschgi, N. & Willi, R. (2015). *Die Relevanz des affektiven Involvements innerhalb des Hostile-Media-Effekts.*

1. Müller, A. & Zurbuchen, A. (2015). *Der Hostile Media Effekt in Verbindung mit Gruppenidentifikation und Status.*

Supervised Master's Theses
at the Department of Communication and Media Research, University of Zurich, Switzerland

4. Bosshart, C. J. (2018). *Persuasive Effekte von rechtspopulistischen Botschaften: Der Einfluss von personellen Merkmalen auf die Exklusionshaltung gegenüber Migranten in der Schweiz.*

3. Birrer, A. (2018). *Populism and Political Cynicism. Eine experimentelle Untersuchung zum Einfluss populistischer Kommunikation auf die Politikverdrossenheit der Bürger in Grossbritannien.*

2. Morossoli, S. (2018). *Die Wirkung populistischer Kommunikation auf die Einstellung gegenüber der politischen Elite.*

1. Ramirez, D. (2014). *Framing-Effekte: Der Einfluss der Immigrationsberichterstattung auf die Einstellung der Rezipienten zur Migrationspolitik.*

Additional Skills

Languages	German (native), English (C2), French (C1), Swedish (A2)
Software	SPSS, Amos, R